Among this week's contributors

MARGARET ALEXIOU is Senior Lecturer in Byzantine and Modern Greek at the University of Birmingham.

KINGSLEY AMIS's novels include *Russian Hide and Seek*, 1980.

SHERWIN BAILEY's most recent book, *The Canonical House of Wells*, was published last year.

DAVID BAIN's *Masters, Servants and Orders in Greek Tragedy* was published earlier this year.

THOMAS BALDWIN is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of York.

GILES BARBER is the Librarian of the Taylor Institution, Oxford.

SIMON BLACKBURN's *Spreading The Word*, an introduction to the philosophy of language, will be published early next year. He is a Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at Pembroke College, Oxford.

JOHN BOWMAN's *De Valera and the Ulster Question: 1917–1973*, 1982, will shortly be issued as a paperback.

P. N. BROOK's recent books include *Seven-Headed Luther*, 1983.

ROBIN BUSS is a lecturer in French at Woolwich College of Further Education.

GEORGE CRAIG is a lecturer in French at the University of Sussex.

PAUL DRIVER is writing a book on Peter Maxwell Davies.

D. J. ENRIGHT is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Death*, published earlier this year.

BRIAN FOTHERGILL's most recent book, *The Strawberry Hill Set: Horace Walpole and his Circle*, will be published this Autumn.

MARGARET GIBSON is Reader in Medieval History at the University of Liverpool.

COLIN GORDON is the editor of *Power/Knowledge: Selected writings of Michel Foucault*, 1980.

FRANCIS HASKELL is Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford and author of *Rediscoveries in Art*, 1976.

DOMINIC HIBBERD is a lecturer in English at the University of Keele.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS is Washington correspondent for *The Nation*.

SIR HAROLD HOBSON is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

SIR DAVID HUNT is the editor of *Footprints in Cyprus: an illustrated History*, 1982.

MICK IMLAH's collection of poems, *The Zoologist's Bath and Other Adventures*, was published last year.

ANN JEFFERSON is the author of *The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction*, 1981.

J. H. C. LEACH is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford.

RICHARD LEHAN's *Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels* was published in 1969.

GWYNNE LEWIS is co-editor of *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History*, which will be published later this year.

ROSAMOND MCKITTERICK is a Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge.

CHARLES MADGE is co-author with Peter Willmott, of *Inner City Poverty in Paris and London*, 1981.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880–1890* was published in 1981.

JOHN RUSSELL is chief art critic of *The New York Times*. His books include *The Meaning of Modern Art*, 1981.

ANNE SMITH's novel, *The Magic Glass*, won the Author's Club Award for first novels in 1982.

MICHAEL SPRINKLER is the author of a study of Gerard Manley Hopkins, *A Counterpoint of Dissonance*, 1981.

ANNE STEVENSON is Northern Arts Fellow in Writing at the Universities of Newcastle and Durham.

NORMAN STONE's *Europe Transformed 1878–1919* was published earlier this year.

GEORGE SZIRTES's most recent collection of poems, *Short Wave*, will be published in November.

J. B. TRAPP is the editor of *The Apology of Sir Thomas More*, 1979.

JAMES WALVIN's books include *Beside the Seaside*, 1978.

ROBERT WELLS's verse translation of Virgil's *Georgics* was published last year.

PETER WILLMOTT is Senior Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute.

LARZER ZIFF's *Literary Democracy* was published in 1981. He is Caroline Donovan Professor of English at Johns Hopkins University.

Author, Author

Competition No 131

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 5. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 131" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 12.

1 "You hear someone shouting 'Beaver' as you pass, and you immediately have the right to rush up and get into conversation . . .".

2 They needed a code word to yell to other newsmen and friendly policemen and firemen and so on, to let them know what could be seen, in case they wanted to see it. The word was this: "Beaver!"

3 Oh yes, my Lord, he wore his beaver up.

Competition No 127

Winner: Jenifer Gosling

Answers:

1 No more an humble Curate now,
He feels a mitre on his brow;
The mildew'd surplice, thus withdrawn,
Yields to the fine, transparent lawn.

William Combe, *Dr Syntax on Tour*, canto 13.

2 Those were the days when a man could hold three small livings, starve a curate apiece on two of them, and live badly himself on the third. It was so with the vicar of Shepperton . . .

George Eliot, *Scenes from Clerical Life*.

3 Of late years, I say, an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England; but in eighteen-hundred-eleven-twelve that affluent rain had not descended; curates were scarce then.

Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, chapter 1.

Information, please

Lord Adair or *Adare* (early 19th century): any information about him, especially about his posthumous papers.
Robert Amadou,
15 rue Frédéric-Sauton, 75005 Paris.

Henry Atherton, minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, between the wars; any information about his activities on behalf of the Sovereign Grace Union, of which he was secretary; also whereabouts of any books, pamphlets and journals published by the SGU since its inception (*c*1914); for a history of the SGU.
Philip Tait,
57 Raglan Court, Empire Way, Middlesex HA9 0RF.

Champagne safaris: book and periodical sources for a book on big-game hunting in Africa and India.
Herbert W. Luthin,
2036 N. Cleveland, Chicago, Illinois 60614.

William Ernest Henley (1849–1903), editor, poet, man of letters: present whereabouts of original letters and copies; for an edition of the letters.
Damian A. P. Atkinson,
19 Gaveston Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 6EX.

Great Dolce: location and identification of; for research about a 1652 letter written at Great Dolce by Richard Lee, of England and Virginia.
Joni Kukla,
Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936): whereabouts of letters, papers; personal memories; for a study.
Peter Clark,
c/o Personnel Records, British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1.

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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The novels of Marguerite Yourcenar

Class, church and the voter

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George Steiner on Thomas Bernhard

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Falling towards death

John Weightman

MARGUERITE YOURCENAR
Oeuvres romanesques
1243pp. Paris: Gallimard. 220fr.

Marguerite Yourcenar already has her niche in history as the first woman ever to be elected to the Académie Française. This, however, may be the least important fact about her, since history may decide that the Académie itself, in the twentieth century, has been a relatively unimportant institution. Proust, Gide, Sartre and Camus quietly disregarded it, and Simone de Beauvoir, the other dominant female on the Parisian literary scene during the last generation, has probably never considered letting her name go forward, although it is also certain that, had she done so, her general political stances would have told against her. A few of the present *Immortels* seem to have a chance of immortality but, by and large, membership of the Académie is not so much a distinction as a distinguishing feature; it means that the writer concerned is acceptable within a certain range of conventions, and is willing to receive the accolade of the believers in these conventions, either through a general sense of solidarity, or for tactical reasons, or – as sometimes seems to happen – with tongue in cheek.

At first sight, at least, Yourcenar is eminently "academic". She writes very careful literary French, studded with archaisms and occasional, and no doubt deliberate, Anglicisms; her tone is *grand bourgeois*, not to say aristocratic, and her themes are invariably noble and exotically distanced from everyday French life. *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, the historical novel which first brought her fame in 1951, at the relatively advanced age of forty-eight, takes the form of a sublime meditation on the problems of governing the Roman Empire, infused with the most minute classical lore, and, as such, constitutes a kind of apotheosis of the traditional French scholastic exercise, although – surprisingly enough – according to the biographical summary included in the Pléiade volume, Yourcenar, in her youth, attended neither school nor university.

The biographical data also reveal that she was quite a safe choice as a first, statutory, female, because she has always been outside Parisian literary politics, and in fact hardly ranks as a metropolitan Frenchwoman at all. She was born in Brussels in 1903, of mixed French and Belgian parentage belonging to the gentry class (Yourcenar is a near anagram of her real *nom à particule*, Marguerite de Crayencour), and her family had ramifications throughout the Low Countries. Her mother having died of puerperal fever a few days after her birth, she was brought up mainly by her father. On the outbreak of war in 1914, they came to England, where they spent a year, and they later led a rather nomadic existence in the south of France, Italy and Switzerland. M de Crayencour must have been a curious mixture of playboy and free-thinking, gentleman-scholar, because it was he who gave her a grounding in Latin and Greek and read many of the French classics with her; nor does he seem to have imposed on her any of the conventional restraints of the time. Father and daughter were fairly constant companions until his death in 1929, after which she continued the nomadic life, in undefined circumstances but with apparently adequate financial resources, sharing her time between France, Italy, Greece and other countries.

In 1934, there occurred a major turning-point: she made the acquaintance, in Paris, of the American Grace Frick, from whom she was to be more or less inseparable during the next forty-five years, and with whom she worked jointly on the English versions of her books. Since Miss Frick's death in 1979, Yourcenar has continued to live in the house they shared on the island called Monts-Déserts, at Northeast Harbour. In effect, since 1939, she has been continuously domiciled in America (she presumably misses most of the meetings *sous la Coupole*), although she has made frequent and extensive trips to Europe. This long foreign residence, together with her mixed origins and her wandering early life, may account for the fact that her spoken French has a distinctly Anglicized ring, at least when heard over the radio. But it is also true, of course, that a slight admixture of Anglo-Saxon phonation has long been a characteristic of a certain type of upper-class French, so that this feature would not necessarily seem inappropriate in a member of the Académie Française.

Like her near-contemporary, the poet St-John Perse, she has, then, the peculiarity of being a notable French writer who was not born in France, and whose life has been spent mainly outside France. He, however, at least went through the educational system in France to some extent and passed the entrance examination to the Diplomatic Service. She received only spasmodic private tuition and her single formal qualification – until universities began awarding her honorary doctorates – was the equivalent of an O or A level in Latin and Greek. A lesson to be learnt from her story is that schools and universities may be irrelevant for children of intellectual stamina, living in a cultured setting and with enough money to travel and follow up their interests as they please. She seems to be fully conversant with Latin and Greek, and to be at home in Italian, Modern Greek and perhaps Dutch, as well as English; we are told that since her seventy-fifth year she has been learning Japanese.

In addition to this linguistic proficiency, Yourcenar's novels – independently of what one may think of them as works of art – show an extraordinary range of knowledge in various fields, and a quite exceptional awareness of the whole French literary tradition. Although, in a partly revealing, partly obfuscatory series of conversations with Matthieu Galey, published under the title *Les Yeux Ouverts* (1980), she protests that she has never been a systematic scholar, she must be one of the most learned practitioners of the French novel in her time. She may have lived a great deal outside France and in communion with foreign cultures, but it is clear, both from her books and her conversation, that she has also always inhabited that country of the imagination where Racine, Rousseau, Balzac, Proust, Gide, Valéry, Camus, etc, exist side by side. Her work seems, in fact, to be remarkably full of echoes of her predecessors.

Her unusual childhood and her marginal relationship to the educational system and to French life as a whole may also help to explain the mixture of precociousness and uncertainty in her literary development. By the time she was nineteen, she had had two volumes of poetry published at her father's expense, and she had written a large part of a long historical novel based on her researches into the story of her family and its connections over the last four centuries. By the age of twenty-one, after a visit to Hadrian's Villa, she had also begun on a work about the Emperor. None of this material was brought to fruition at that stage, either because she cast her net too wide or because her lack of maturity made the difficulties insuperable. However, she has explained that these manuscripts, a proportion of which she destroyed, contained the germs of much of her later writing, and even characters and episodes that she was able to incorporate, almost without modification, into books composed thirty, forty or fifty years later.

If her account is accurate, she is an astonishing case of fidelity to a fundamental purpose and of lack of immediate literary ambition. Perhaps, in her early years, she put living before writing – it may be significant that she makes one of her heroes say: "Les livres ne contiennent pas la vie; ils n'en contiennent que la cendre" – and had the sort of temperament that allowed her to wait for her themes to ripen of their own accord. The sentence just quoted comes from *Alexis ou le vain combat*, which achieved a modest *succès d'estime* in 1929 and was, she says, a conscientious writing up of the life-story of a person known to her. Similarly, she presents *Le Coup de grâce* (1939) as the imaginative retelling of an actual anecdote, not as a personal invention. It is almost as if her literary career did not really get under way until after the Second World War, with the success of *Mémoires d'Hadrien* in 1951. From that point onwards, some of her earlier works were reissued, some unpublished texts were brought out for the first time, either in their original versions or with modifications, and – as I have said – she went on to recast parts of her early family chronicle. It now took the form of two fictional works, *L'Oeuvre au noir*, a historical novel, and *Comme l'eau qui coule*, a group of three novellas, and two volumes of biography entitled *Archives du Nord*.

Because of the complicated circumstances of Yourcenar's career and her habit of rewriting, it is impossible to establish a meaningful chronological sequence for the eight titles included in this Pléiade volume. One cannot put them in a temporal order and, in the light of such an arrangement, comment on the writer's intellectual and artistic development. The only approach is to make a qualitative judgment and to try to distinguish between major and minor, relative success or relative failure.

Her reputation, in my view, will depend essentially on the two big historical novels, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, an evocation of the Roman Empire in its last great period, and *L'Oeuvre au noir*, an account of the religious and intellectual turmoil of Renaissance Europe, seen from the angle of the Low Countries. To these can be added *Un homme obscur*, the longest novella in *Comme l'eau qui coule*, which is another historical reconstruction, set mainly in the Low Countries, probably in the seventeenth century, although no dates are mentioned. Each of the three works has a central character – Hadrian the Emperor, Zénon, an alchemist-intellectual, and Nathanaël, an average, well-meaning working-class man – around whom a whole



Marguerite Yourcenar enters the French Academy. With her are André Roussin, Jean d'Ormesson and Jean Mistler.

humanistic philosophy is organized. The critical points at issue are the nature of this philosophy and the success of its artistic embodiment in novel form.

With the exception of *Nouvelles Orientales*, a charmingly whimsical set of little moral fables written in various exotic modes – neo-Chinese or Japanese, Greek, Indian, etc – all the other works, while illustrating Yourcenar's very self-conscious mastery of the high literary style, produce an effect of imitativeness and uncentredness, as if the underlying themes had not been properly identified and put into perspective. The most markedly inadequate is *Denier du rêve*, which is set in Italy during the early years of Mussolini's rule. The book has no plot as such, the nine characters being accidentally linked by the passing from one to another of a coin, a ten-lira piece, the *denier*, which in each case buys the person concerned some imaginative escape from the pressures of existence: a deserted husband gives it to the prostitute who provides him with temporary relief; the prostitute uses it to buy make-up to prettify herself for a meeting with her *amant de coeur*, and so on, until finally it is picked out of the Trevi Fountain by a workman who gets drunk to forget his miseries. The interconnections are gratuitously emphasized by a welter of extreme coincidences, all ultimately linked to a bungled attempt on Mussolini's life. The general atmosphere is one of heavy, self-consciously poetic melancholy about the futility of all these individual existences, and the connection with the detailed political situation in Mussolini's Italy is no more than tenuous, although Yourcenar apparently wrote the first version while living in that country. In her comments on the book, she makes no mention of Jules Romains and his theory of *L'Unanimisme*, which he had exemplified in the novel, *Mort de quelqu'un* (1911), but I would guess that she has applied to Rome the *unanimiste* technique of juxtaposing individual destinies to give an impression of collective truth. If so, one can only say that the theory itself is dubious, and its application here psychologically banal. If no influence from Romains is involved, Yourcenar must have invented the unsatisfactory *unanimiste* approach of her own accord.

In the case of *Alexis ou le vain combat*, the debt to André Gide is abundantly obvious, both in the form of the work, which is that of a unilinear, exquisitely phrased, first-person narrative – a *Gidian récit* – and the subject-matter, the dilemma of a married homosexual who, after considerable heart-searching, decides to leave the wife he "loves" in order to obey the fundamental impulse of his nature. In fact, the book can be seen as an alternative version of Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902), set in pre-1914 Poland and Austria instead of in France and the Mediterranean, and with the difference that Gide's hero, Michel, addresses his confession to an old friend after the death of his wife, whereas that of Alexis takes the form of a letter to his still living spouse to explain his departure. He uses the Gidean argument about the distinction to be drawn between love, which is what he feels for his wife, and desire, which he is driven to satisfy elsewhere. The tone is again one of distinguished melancholy, with occasional generalizations in the manner of the French *moralistes*, some of them, it must be admitted, fairly lame – eg, "le bonheur n'est, peut-être, qu'un malheur mieux supporté". There are none of the spurts of lyrical genius which redeem Gide's imperfect novel, only some agreeable descriptions of pre-1914 East European society, and the homosexual theme is presented in such a muffled way as to make no clear impact.

Le Coup de grâce is very similar, but more interesting. Erik, a German aristocrat, has long been the friend (perhaps in the most intimate sense) of Conrad, a Pole, and of his sister, Sophie, whose country mansion is in the Polish war-zone during the fighting after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Eric goes back there to help in the struggle, and Sophie falls in love with him. Since he cannot respond to her advances, she sleeps around, and finally goes off to join a politically minded Jew, who has crossed over to the Bolshevik side. Eventually, the Russian detachment is captured by Erik's soldiers, and the traitors have to be executed. Sophie demands that Erik himself should carry out the sentence. He complies and blows her brains out with his revolver, thus delivering the *coup de grâce* after having been the cause of her suicidal despair. This novel is distinguished by some highly evocative descriptions of the war-time scene, and it has a genuine sadistic, or even tragic, vibration. But again, the theme of homosexuality, which is essential to the plot, is dealt with only obliquely. Erik plays a sort of cat-and-mouse game with Sophie and the obstacle between them is never openly discussed.

This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to ask why male homosexuality is such a recurrent theme in Yourcenar's writings, without ever being dealt with in a fully open and direct manner. She has said that both Alexis and Erik were modelled on people she happened to know in real life. Her other three main heroes, Hadrian, Zénon and Nathanaël, are bisexual, the first two with a dominant *pro-male tendency*; Hadrian's greatest passion is, in middle life, for the catamite, Antinous, a detail which comes, of course, from the historical record; Zénon prefers boys to girls, thus resembling one of the real-life characters who inspired features of his make-up, Leonardo da Vinci; Nathanaël, while taking the active role with women who offer themselves to him, feels it quite natural, so his creator says, to be the sexual partner of an older man who befriends him. Yourcenar has also devoted two of her very rare critical articles to the homosexual writers, Cavafy and Mishima; I have not managed to find

the second of these, but the study of Cavafy, which I have read, is curiously remote and does not tackle the importance of the homosexual theme in his poetry, although one presumes that it was a reason for her interest in him. Also, throughout her work, there are many references to sex of an orgiastic or more or less "deviant" kind, but no major instance of a "normal" love affair. This is the one respect in which Yourcenar might be considered an unorthodox Academician, and it is a pity that M Galey, either through embarrassment or misplaced discretion, does not question her explicitly about it in *Les Yeux Ouverts*, in spite of the programmatic title of that book.

If Yourcenar herself were homosexual – as one might perhaps suppose – one would have expected her, at this point in literary history, to have written a lesbian counterpart to Gide's *L'Immoraliste*, instead of producing a superfluous echo of that male-centred novel in *Alexis ou le vain combat*. After all, Colette, in whom Yourcenar surprisingly shows no particular interest, had already opened up the subject of lesbianism to some extent, and it seems clear that male and female homosexuality are much too unlike to be used as simple allegorical substitutes for each other. Actually, Yourcenar appears to have left the written evidence about her own experiences deliberately ambiguous, in spite of the fact that she presents one work in the Pléiade volume as being frankly autobiographical. This is *Feux*, "produit d'une crise passionnelle", written at the age of thirty-two and consisting of fragments from the author's diary, interspersed with prose-poems in the form of fanciful re-tellings of the stories of famous lovers, Phaedra, Sappho, Achilles, etc. But, despite its confessional appearance, the book is like an extremely decorative screen put up to hide any literal truth, apart from the fact that the experience was unhappy, and led perhaps to thoughts of suicide. One has to look very closely at the text to discover whether the object of the author's passion was a man or a woman; the masculine form of two adjectives is the only tiny indication that it was a man, but when, in a moment of hatred, the author curses him for his infidelities, his other relationships appear equivocal: "Je te souhaite avec horreur une trahison de Camille, un échec près de Claude, un scandale qui t'éloignerait d'Hippolyte". The first two names can be used for either sex, but Hippolyte is normally masculine. Could it be that Yourcenar, whatever her own dominant propensities, formed an attachment to a homosexual or a bisexual, and thus found herself in the position of Sophie, the heroine of *Le Coup de grâce*, in relation to Erik? However, if so, this still does not explain why she wrote up the experience from the male, rather than the female, point of view.

I may appear to be labouring the point unduly; my excuse is that the sexual theme is obviously very important for Yourcenar, but that her inability or unwillingness to put it clearly into perspective from a definite angle helps to account for the relative failure of the early works and for some patchiness in the later ones. It may be that, as a latter-day pagan by temperament and culture, she sees human beings in general as pan-sexual, that is, able or compelled to operate, according to circumstances, anywhere along the scale from masculine to feminine, or from "normality" to "perversity", and that, projecting herself into male heroes, as women writers have traditionally done, she makes them, all ambitious to emphasize this point. I can only say that, in my mind, she does not do so with any revelatory acuteness, and so this obsessive feature of her work remains unsatisfactory.

The post-war literary activity which led to the production of her three major historical novels, was sparked off, she says, by the arrival from Europe in 1948 of a trunk containing old manuscripts, including her early writings about Hadrian. She set to work and *Mémoires* was ready by 1951. As it happens, 1948 also saw the publication of Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*, a historical novel in epistolary form, which was a best-seller for a time. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that she had read it, or heard about it, and was encouraged to think that she might have some success with a more serious and substantial treatment of the imperial theme. Her book is certainly a far more ambitious work than Wilder's *jeu d'esprit* about Roman intrigues; it is, in fact, a *summa* into which she has packed the whole substance of her life and studies up to that point.

She again uses the Gidian *récit*, but in a greatly expanded form; Hadrian, feeling the approach of death, writes a long valedictory letter to the young Marcus Aurelius, next but one in the line of succession, to explain how he came to power and according to what principles he has governed the Empire. At the same time, he allows himself lengthy meditative or poetic asides on any subject that occurs – the phenomenology of food and drink, sex, landscapes, architecture, etc. Here again, there is a Gidian precedent: as his last fictional work, Gide had written a similar valedictory testament, using the symbolic figure of Theseus as his mouthpiece (*Thésée*, 1946). Since he was by then old and rather enfeebled, his is a relatively slight book, but it may have contributed to some extent to *Mémoires d'Hadrien*.

Mémoires is, then, part historical novel and part general reflection about life. During the first few chapters, suspense is maintained by the question: will Hadrian succeed in getting himself adopted as successor to Trajan? After his accession, the book becomes almost a Utopian dream of omnipotence, reminiscent – but on a different level – of Frederick Rolfe's megalomaniacal fable, *Hadrian the Seventh*. Yourcenar's Hadrian is, on the whole, a man of good will, both realistic and idealistic, Spanish-Roman in the seriousness of his temperament and Greek by culture, who enjoys his tremendous task of holding the myriad peoples of the Empire together in relative peace, and who, in late middle age, can look back with some satisfaction:

> J'avais gouverné un monde . . . j'y avais maintenu la paix. Je l'avais gréé comme un beau navire appareillé pour un voyage qui durera des siècles; j'avais lutté de mon mieux pour favoriser le sens du divin dans l'homme, sans pourtant y sacrifier l'humain. Mon bonheur n'était un pavement.

The meeting with Antinous occurs when he is at the peak of his success, and the episode is, unfortunately, rather sentimental and novelettish. Since Antinous is much like the other handsome youths who flit through the book, and the Emperor can choose any one, it is not obvious why this relationship should mean so much to him, or why, after Antinous's death, he, the arch-humanist, should encourage a religious cult of the boy's memory, while consoling himself with other youths. However, from that point onwards, Hadrian's star wanes and the rest of the story is an elegiac fall towards death. The great humanist has governed the world with some success, but mortality, in the end, takes its toll of everyone.

The book is an impressive achievement, displaying an effortless deployment of historical detail and containing some beautifully realized episodes. One may wonder, of course, if the real Hadrian was not more barbaric and further removed from us than Yourcenar's hero. She makes him sound at times like a blandly dictatorial Secretary General of the United Nations, which is perhaps natural enough, since she has said that she wrote the book in a mood of optimism when the establishment of a post-war world order still seemed possible. If *Mémoires* has a serious fault, it lies in the frequent bouts of high-falutin sententiousness, unrelieved by the wit or impishness which usually allowed Gide to give an ironical flavour to his rhetoric. Passages like this sound like Gide made ponderous:

> A cette époque, je mettais à affirmer mon bonheur, à le goûter, à le juger aussi, cette attention constante que j'avais toujours donnée aux moindres détails de mes actes; et qu'est la volupté elle-même sinon un moment d'attention passionnée du corps? Tout bonheur est un chef d'oeuvre: la moindre erreur le fausse, la moindre hesitation l'altère, la moindre lourdeur le dépare, la moindre sottise l'abêtit.

The *lourdeur* of this accomplished but slightly leaden prose is also to be found in parts of *L'Oeuvre au noir* which, although written in the third person, follows the same pattern of novel-like incidents interspersed with set-pieces of discussion or reflective interior monologues. The book begins as if it were to have two heroes; Zénon, the seeker after truth who represents the transition from alchemy to science in the turmoil of the Renaissance world, and his half-brother, Henri-Maximilien, the man of action who hopes for glory and profit as a mercenary soldier. The opening scene, in which the two brothers set off on their different picaresque careers, is almost operatic in its simplicity. Henri-Maximilien proclaims: "Il s'agit d'être homme", to which Zénon responds: "Il s'agit pour moi d'être plus qu'un homme". When they meet up again in middle life a hundred pages later, they compare notes during a long, disillusioned conversation; Henri-Maximilien has lost the bloom of youth, without making his fortune; Zénon's hopes of transcendental knowledge have been replaced by a belief in empirical science and the practice of medicine, and he is in danger of persecution as a heretic. Shortly afterwards, Henri-Maximilien is killed in a skirmish, and the last two-thirds of the book concentrate on Zénon's activities as a doctor in Bruges, until the Church catches up with him and he commits suicide to avoid being burnt at the stake.

This book is less certain in structure than *Mémoires*, but it produces a rather more vivid effect, perhaps because Yourcenar is dealing not with the remote Ancient World but with the Flemish tradition that was the background to her family history. Zénon is a composite figure, modelled on Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and various other Renaissance intellectuals whom Yourcenar had studied in detail. In his reflective moments, he also seems to owe a lot to a more recent figure, Paul Valéry, who was, of course, obsessed by Leonardo. The author, with her remarkable assimilative faculty, appears to have picked up several themes from Valéry and developed them in her own way, especially Valéry's incessant concern with the tension between the consciousness and the somatic functioning of the body. To quote only one example, the following meditation on excrement is a sort of Valérian prose-poem, but again in a style slightly heavier than Valéry's:

> Plus achimistes qu'il ne l'avait jamais été lui-même, ses boyaux opéraient la transmutation de cadavres de bêtes ou de plantes en matière vivante, séparant sans son aide l'inutile de l'utile. *Ignis inferioris naturae*: ces spirales de boue brune savamment lovées, fumant encore des cuissons qu'elles avaient subies dans leur moule, ce pot d'argile plein d'un fluide ammoniaqué et nitré étaient la preuve visible et puante du travail parachevé dans des officines où nous n'intervenons pas. Il semblait à Zénon que le dégoût des raffinés et le rire sale des ignares étaient moins dus à ce que ces objets offusquent nos sens, qu'à notre horreur devant l'indéluctable et secrète routine du corps.

The title, *L'Oeuvre au noir*, as she explains it, corresponds in fact to Valéry's analytical enterprise, which is comparable to the *opus nigrum* of the alchemists: the breaking down of the given into its elements in the hope of an eventual, and more precious, synthesis. In the novel, the synthesis is never achieved; empirical, scientific knowledge gives great power, which Zénon develops as best he can, but it does not, in the last resort, give power over its own power, or over the wilfulness of mankind, and Zénon foresees the possibility of atomic energy and the dislocation of the planet. If, risking a broad generalization, we read *Mémoires d'Hadrien* and *L'Oeuvre au noir* not as historical novels at all but as philosophical allegories, we might say that the first corresponds, by and large, to Gidean humanism: human life is ultimately tragic, but if men of good will organize the world to the best of their ability and in accordance with the multiple needs of human nature, a degree of happiness and serenity can be achieved. The second is nearer to Valéry's nihilistic humanism: in spite of moments of intense poetic delight and the perpetually renewed excitement of the thirst for knowledge, life is, at bottom, an inextricable jumble, an endless political-cum-religious tragedy, over which we have no real control – in short, "un défaut dans la pureté du Non-Être".

This latter impression is conveyed by a very powerful and colourful account of the religious and political chaos of Renaissance Europe, especially as it was reflected in Bruges. In addition to her mastery of intellectual debate, Yourcenar has considerable gifts as an instinctive novelist, capable of rendering the irrational details of everyday life with a sort of Flemish earthiness and solidity. The highlights of the book are not only the sophisticated discussions about belief and non-belief between Zénon and a genuinely religious-minded prelate, but also certain purely non-reflective episodes such as a description of the siege of Münster or the story of how Zénon tries in vain to escape from Bruges.

In the third historical novel, *Un homme obscur*, the instinctive novelist seems to take over altogether, and philosophical reflection is almost completely eliminated. It is as if Yourcenar, after presenting two different types of "great" individual, the man of action and the thinker/scientist, had decided to try her hand at another human type, the average decent man, to whom it never occurs to try to be the master of his fate, but who reacts with modest courage to the Absurd torrent of events. Here again, there are obvious literary references. The hero is called Nathanaël, a name made famous by Gide through its frequent use as a vocative in *Les Nourritures Terrestres*; Yourcenar may have chosen it ironically, because Gide's narrator frequently calls upon his Nathanaël to become the bold architect of his own personal happiness. But, since *Un homme obscur* was mainly written in the 1970s, she had no doubt also had time to read Camus; at least, one cannot help seeing parallels with *La Mort heureuse* and *L'Etranger*, and even *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and Camus's early essays. Like Mersault of *La Mort heureuse*, Nathanaël is tubercular, and his slow death on the shore of one of the Frisian Islands offers a remarkable similarity with Mersault's corresponding demise on the Mediterranean coast near Algiers. He has the rather dumb well-meaningness and essential innocence of Meursault of *L'Etranger*, and also Camus's general feeling for the tragic beauty of landscape, as well as his vague nostalgia to relinquish consciousness and become "une pierre parmi les pierres".

Nevertheless, Nathanaël is firmly set in Yourcenar's own cultural context: he begins life in Greenwich, England, as a member of the Dutch ship-building colony there; he runs away to sea and has various experiences on the east coast of America; he comes back to settle in Amsterdam, first as a journeyman-printer involved with a Jewish prostitute, then as a valet in the house of a rich merchant, for whose widowed daughter he conceives a tender attachment. As his tuberculosis worsens, the family send him to their summer cabin in the Frisian Islands, where he dies alone in mute contemplation of the indifferent cosmic forces of the sky and the sea. Yourcenar doesn't manage, and perhaps doesn't try to make his story as archetypal as those of Mersault and Moursault; Camus had invented the "outsider" once and for all; for she does succeed admirably in adapting a Camus-like Absurdist humanism to the picaresque career of a minor Northern hero, and in expressing the near-inarticulate in beautifully articulate French, from which sententiousness has been finally exorcized.

After rejecting the idea of a chronological development in Yourcenar's work, I now realize that I have, in fact, indicated something approaching such a development, corresponding to the successive publication of the three major post-war novels, whatever early fragments they may contain. I read them as a tripych, expressing significant variations on a basic (twentieth-century humanism: relatively confident, then more anguished, and finally Absurdist quietist. That this humanism has been nourished by an exceptionally close reading of Gide, Valéry, Camus and various other French writers of the near or more remote past; there can, I think, be little doubt. But, in these three works of her maturity, Yourcenar has her own voice with its original and unusual Low Countries timbre.

Peter Porter

A Guide to the Gods

You must recall that here they are intense,
Our gods. Each corner shop may need oblations
So the genius rests content. Kick a dog turd
Dry and crumbling. Every third display of okra
On the footpath must be stolen from – one finger
Will suffice. Touch your collar points when
Passing electricity showrooms, for these
The ghost of light supports a goddess
Veiled in wrath. Parades of the holy mad
Transferring parcels should be followed
(But judiciously). Bag women and drunks
Have been identified as Furies, but I
Do not wholly credit this. Hurry home before
The postman if you see him near your door:
That letter threatening a visit will not come.
Parse the shorter sentences in Health Food Stores,
Their higher prices are most magical.
Believe me, burst water mains may be
Oracular, but every man of sense resists
Coercion. When they wish to speak to us
The gods behave with plainness and with modesty.
Next time I'll tell you about Zeus.
Hasphestos, Artemis and other probabilities,
But that is fiction and not upon our scale.

Mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show

Linda Taylor

CLIVE JAMES
Brilliant Creatures
317pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02122 2

Clive James has entered the ring again in his padded leather writer's mittens and this time he's socking it to us with a novel. Well . . . it's almost a novel – James's initial defensive tactic is to qualify (in his introduction) the nature of the book he has written: "[it] will have to be called a novel, even though it is patently not a novel in the accepted sense." Novels in the accepted sense, he calls "proper" novels – they're the ones that everyone else is writing and he has "nothing but respect" for their "detached limpidity". Round one to James.

Apparently, with its "autonomous naturalism", and its ability to "pass the test of credibility . . . the novel proper is in the main line of human achievement" (it looks like he's sparring with Leavis) while "the novel improper is, at best, what used to be called a sport", though it does have "its own interesting heritage from Sterne down through Peacock to Firbank and beyond." Round two to James – he's given himself a respectable heritage without having to live up to any preconceived notions of form or style.

By such disclaimers, James has entitled himself to do what he most likes doing: play. And this particular writing game, it seems, is going to be more solipsistic, more self-indulgent, than anything he has written before. In some sense, he says, all the characters are parts of himself: "These are the creatures of my mind." (Though I'm hesitant to take on the burly kid from Kogarah, isn't that in the nature of character, anyway, whether you're writing proper or improper novels?) James, in fact, ensures that he writes a properly improper novel by taking on board some eighteenth-century luggage – the ingenuous introduction and a long final section of spoof academic notes – and, for good measure, he's added a comprehensive index of references and cross references. Within the narrative, the scheme of the book, with its assembly of odd characters, its diverting dialogue and its absurd incidents, is loosely Peacockian.

When, however, James stops hiding his traces with jokes about the price of taxis, the inefficiency of British Rail or the exotic passengers on the Underground there is a more serious point being made. It's a point about mirror images: "when you look at others you see yourself reflected, and when you look at yourself you are nowhere to be found."

Where Peregrine Prykke was a caricature among caricatures, Lancelot Windhover, the central character in *Brilliant Creatures*, exists only in the way that everyone else exists – as reflections of one another. What James shows, beneath all the glitter and fun, is the way in which we invent the people that we meet in order to make them conform to certain patterns that we inhabit, and, in turn, how we adapt ourselves to the ideas that others have of us. The London literary scene, once again the butt of James's satire, is a brittle ego machine in which individuality is sacrificed to the monster, gossip. It is also an incestuous cloning device whereby the publishers, writers, journalists and hostesses, who know each other through various permutations of parties, lunches and dinners (and who get to know each other better through more private liaisons in and out of bed), have interchangeable characteristics, lead interchangeable lives.

To enhance the mirroring effect, James employs a kind of novelistic echolalia through the repetition of language and events. Early on, for instance, Lancelot imagines "the stabbed corpse of some forgotten young actor [floating] outside in the swimming pool" of a Los Angeles hotel. Later, at one of Victor Ludlow's flashy publisher's parties, there is, indeed, a "celebrated actor . . . floating fully dressed, face upwards in the swimming pool." And, later still, at a Los Angeles party in a pool in the middle of the house, another "celebrated actor floated . . . fully dressed and face up." What does it mean? In another kind of novel (the surrealistic kind?) such an event would be loaded with symbolic significance. Here, though, it is simply an example of reflection. Because it is the kind of thing that might conceivably happen, it can, therefore, happen over and over again, like the taxi driver's conversation with Lancelot about turning railway lines into coach roads, which reiterates a literary luncheon conversation at Foscuri's. Similarly, characters repeat each other's words verbatim, and the beginnings of paragraphs or chapters often echo the endings of previous paragraphs or chapters.

Literary London is peopled by interlocking couples. Not only do they reflect each others' thoughts and actions, they also have the habit of changing partners with the speed and expertise of a square dance formation. Lancelot, who is married to the academic Charlotte ("for an automatic entrée to the less interesting, but, he had presumed, more deeply satisfying world which lay beyond and above the Bohemia he had already conquered"), is in love with Samantha who, regardless of her double first, writes feature articles for the glossy magazines. Charlotte, therefore, feels at liberty to fall for the radical writer, David, who has to get rid of his girlfriend, Gaga. And so on. In a sense it doesn't matter who you are with as everyone is (almost) the same – a notion symbolized by the fancy dresses worn at Elena's opera ball: "Aidas were avoiding each other. Figaros were being furtive. Kundrys collided." James skips lightly through the collisions and revisions and divisions, only occasionally losing his footing to betray some emotion, some pain below the surface. It's his life, after all, that he's describing – he merely "changed his name to several names, dressed each of them differently in bits and pieces of made-up bodies and imagined histories, withdrew from the centre so that his creatures could all meet in the same glass room, and then wrote down what they did."

And, given that it is his life, James can't resist a few coded references to the real London scene. Langan's, Bertorelli's and the Zanzibar are obliquely specified. And there are no prizes for identifying the man with the famous sneer who writes minimally about poets, the novelist who writes disgusting books and who looks like a fallen cherub, "Tim Stripling [who] wrote plays at such an intellectual altitude that only a symbolic logician could follow the plots", or the critic, Paula Thorax, with "her rugged good looks" and "dark glasses".

The improper novel, it transpires, is an excuse for random fisticuffs. Forget about the Marquis of Queensberry, we're in the ring with a professional amateur; James's sheer forcefulness is as overpowering, likeable and ultimately unmemorable as ever. His prose is briefly effective for its bizarre similes, his comic scenes have local vigour. The mirroring effect is a good idea but it makes no sense of the book's excrescences and only marginal sense of its solipsism. Novelistically, it is a self-defeating process. If an author's characters are only devices by which the author himself is revealed, what he has written is a kind of autobiography. As James himself says, he "got away with . . . labelling [*Unreliable Memoirs*] as an autobiography, but the same trick will not work twice."

Grounded by anxiety

John Melmoth

HUGH FLEETWOOD
A Dance to the Glory of God
183pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 11088 2

"The Dance", the first and most conspicuously structured of the six stories in Hugh Fleetwood's *A Dance to the Glory of God*, encloses a split, a disjunction or ambivalence which is characteristic of the collection as a whole. There is the robust comedy with which Gabby Aunt Con is depicted. She is the kind of aunt who won't offer you a drink now because there's bound to be more than enough later and for whom even listening to Mozart is sinful – we have no "right" to anything so beautiful. Her freezing glance might have set Bertram Wooster shaking like an aspen. There are also the jugubrious *Bildungsroman* (a portrait of the artist as depressive), the report on the condition of England (a national decline into shabbiness) and the listless drilling of squads of tired antitheses: acting and being, dream and reality, existence and essence. Stuart Carter, the ex-pat actor who is responsible for much of the extra-narrative speculation, simultaneously professes a reluctance to formulate his feelings and analyses them at some length. An expert comedy of manners is frustratingly disrupted by metaphysical discursions which tend towards incoherence.

Fleetwood's last book, the novel *A Young Fair God*, which exposed the lurid imaginings of an obnoxious schoolboy *ubermensch*, was, as theatrical in manner as in subject: dark gods, ritual murder and unquiet loins. These new stories are more sedate. They provide an intimate account of the nuances of evasion and compromise, the strategies adopted by the protagonists simply in order to get through the day. The normal condition of Stuart, Anthony ("The Inventor") and Hugh ("Robert") is that of alienation and panic. Clinging tenaciously to the margins of existence, they are alone in space, abandoned, deracinated; condemned to freedom, ontologically insecure, cosmically embarrassed. Their anxieties preoccupy them practically to the exclusion of all else.

One character quotes Chekhov: "Let the cranes philosophise as much as they like as long as they keep on flying." Far from taking flight, these lame ducks are unable even to feel secure on the ground which is rent with fissures, liable to heave and crack. The metaphors that they employ to convey their unease emphasize their dizziness: they fear slipping through the ice, stepping off the cliff, falling off the edge of the world.

Each character seeks a way of coping with the sense of impending dissolution which is Fleetwood's enduring subject. Paradoxically, the homosexual Stuart feels most secure abroad. His Italy, like E. M. Forster's, is sufficiently un-English to make sexual experience possible. Hugh's contact with the second-rate bohemia of the Spanish Steps makes him feel, for the first time, welcome in the world. After the death of her husband and the wasted years with the narcissistic Georg, Sally finds comfort in the love of God although she occasionally wonders if her new faith is nothing more than menopausal whimsy. Pat (in "The Story of the World"), tortured in a Chilean prison, atheistic and sloppy, is compelled to elaborate his own mythology. Radical solipsist, he recreates the universe with "a flabby imprisoned disgraceful god at its centre". Lacking the means to write his story down, he must ceaselessly repeat it to himself, terrified lest he lose his gist and, in relinquishing control over events, literally lose the world.

In *Fictional Lives*, Fleetwood's previous collection of stories, Joseph Brandon maintained that good writers are nothing more than "historians of the present". *A Dance to the Glory of God* exceeds this brief to the extent that, having specified the disasters of everyday life, it seeks to impose a system of meaning upon them. It is tendentious and exegetical. Its circumlocutions are self-indulgent. For all their fluency and seriousness, these stories patently lack the edge and precision that a more consistently ironic perspective might have lent them.

Fallen among Finns

T. J. Binyon

JOHN GARDNER
Icebreaker
250pp. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 02949 5

This is the third James Bond adventure written by John Gardner following in the footsteps of Ian Fleming. Bond, in unholy alliance with the CIA, the KGB and the Israeli secret service, travels to Finland to meet a beautiful girl or two and, *en passant*, to destroy a neo-Nazi terrorist group that, under the deeply sinister leadership of Count Conrad von Glöda, aims at world domination: anything less would be something of an anticlimax.

We can't take with any seriousness these attempts to prolong artificially the life of a popular hero if we're not convinced by the imitation of the original's manner: and the better the original is, of course, the more difficult it is to hit this latter off. At one extreme no one has come anywhere near producing an even half good imitation Sherlock Holmes. At the other, Sexton Blake has been soldiering on since 1893, unperturbed by the stylistic vagaries of the two hundred odd scribblers who have contributed towards his existence. And Gerard Fairlie followed Sapper without causing Bulldog Drummond to spill a drop of his beer, or Phyllis to turn an immaculately coiffured hair.

John Gardner falls somewhere between these two extremes. His plot is full of good notion; his torture scenes are splendidly painful; his villain is adequately megalomaniac, though perhaps not *sufficiently cruel*; his girls are pretty, sexy and available, and the courting routines as embarrassingly unsubtle as anything in the original. And he throws into the brew a good handful or two of Bond Street brand names. Indeed, he's outdone Fleming in one respect, in that he's given the new Bond a quality which would have come in very useful in the past; he's made him prescient. How else to explain the fact that Bond orders from Q Branch a "large Paine-Wessex 'Speedline' line-throwing pack" and thirty pages later, with no prior warning, is using it to haul a girl out of a patch of soft snow in which she's been deposited by a Second World War landmine?

But in the end Gardner's Bond doesn't really measure up to Fleming's. There isn't that maniacal snobbery about trivial and useless detail which the original so endearingly manifests. And, furthermore, Gardner simply hasn't grasped Bond's most important trait: he only takes assignments in places where his creator would like to take a holiday. And who on earth would want to holiday in the "desolate Arctic wastes of Lapland"? Certainly not the luxurious Bond. For snow one goes to Switzerland, Italy at a pinch; for blondes Las Vegas, and the only ice-breaking one does is in a highball glass. But Finland: that's down-market, Deighton or le Carré territory.

Publishers are probably almost as obtuse as film producers in the inability to tell the difference between killing the goose that lays the golden eggs and flogging a dead horse: but isn't it time to let Bond retire to that leather armchair in the club, where he can – favouring his gout – put one leg up on a footstool, and occasionally, on a summer afternoon made more drowsy by an extra glass of port after lunch, with a young friend down from Eton for the day, exhibit his unique collection of international lovebites?

The Architecture of Cognition
by JOHN R ANDERSON

A major event in cognitive science, *The Architecture of Cognition* presents the latest version of Anderson's well-known cognitive theory (ACT) and argues tellingly that the system provides a basic framework for a unified theory of the human mind.

This exceptional book is the first coherent reply to Chomsky, Fodor, and others who have recently advocated the return to a psychology of independent mental faculties. Anderson believes, to the contrary, that a uniform cognitive architecture can account equally well for the acquisition and performance of such diverse skills as solving geometry problems, programming computers, playing chess, and learning a first language. In this book, he supplies the details of theory and data to back his claim and presents what he views as "the final major reformulation within the ACT framework." As such, it is likely to remain the state-of-the-art for some time to come. *Cognitive Science Series*, July 1983, £20·00

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD

The denominational vote

James Cornford

KENNETH D. WALD

Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment Since 1885
263pp. Princeton University Press. £21.60.
0 691 05365 0

Voter alignment in Britain is a hot topic. Was Labour's showing in the recent election due to tactical folly or structural failure? Would things have looked very different under another leader? Or was it the result of the shrinkage of Labour's traditional base in the mines, the docks, the railways, the steel works and so forth? Or does the increasing volatility of the electorate presage not the replacement of Labour by an alternative with a different social base, but an entirely new sort of relationship between the voters and all the parties? If we are puzzled about what is happening now it is not surprising: we are still puzzled about what happened in the last great realignment when Labour replaced the Liberals. It is on this realignment that Kenneth D. Wald's interesting and infuriating book attempts to throw light, by an analysis of the general elections between 1885 and 1910.

The Third Reform Act of 1885 is the obvious place to start. It extended the vote to the majority of adult males, abolishing an arbitrary distinction between borough and county constituencies, many of which were industrial, urban or suburban. For the first time a large majority of constituencies returned a single member and the cities were divided in the way familiar to us now. Along with the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, the increase in the electorate confined direct bribery to a handful of small towns, and something like a national campaign was waged across the country. The first general election conducted under its aegis resulted in a triumph for the Gladstonian coalition, which promptly fell apart, weakened immediately by a dramatic secession to the right over Home Rule and more gradually by a growing demand for independent labour representation on the left.

Seven further general elections were fought before the First World War in the same constituencies with the same franchise. Together they provide a convenient set for analysing the fortunes of the political parties and the behaviour of the electorate. The prevailing orthodoxy, crudely put, holds that this period saw the emergence of two characteristic features of twentieth-century electoral behaviour: the first, a common national movement of opinion at elections with little regional or constituency variation; and the second, class, variously and often vaguely defined, as the strongest influence on the individual voter's choice of party. It is with the second of these propositions that Dr Wald takes issue. He harks back to an earlier view that the underlying dimension which best explains voters' allegiances up to the First World War is not class but denomination: Anglican Tories, nonconformist Liberals. The significance of this proposition is to delay the emergence of class as the salient determinant of voting until after the further extension of the franchise in 1918 and to throw doubt on the view that the Liberals already had the working-class vote before 1914 and threw it away by factical ineptitude and divisions in the leadership. The interest of Wald's book lies not so much in his thesis, which is both familiar and plausible, but in the way he sets out to establish it.

The problems facing the electoral analyst in this period are formidable. It is not a straightforward matter to compare one election with another: variations in turnout, in the number of seats contested and in the party affiliations of candidates all create problems. These are nothing beside the problems in finding satisfactory measures, whether for class or denomination, to correlate with the voting statistics. The administrative system might have been expressly designed to frustrate the electoral geographer. The boundaries of registration districts and local authorities seldom coincide with those of constituencies. The census data were collected with other purposes in mind and are difficult to interpret, let alone manipulate. Information on church membership and attendance is sparse. For these reasons historians of the period have either eschewed statistical analysis or undertaken it in a limited way using imperfect surrogate measures for the social composition of constituencies.

Wald is rightly critical of these efforts and himself attempts something altogether more systematic and ambitious. He brings to this task a clear head, technical sophistication and a boldness bordering on effrontery. But despite sympathy and admiration for his thoroughness and ingenuity, I do not think he gets us any nearer to sorting out the complex interactions involved in social change and the success and failure of political parties in adapting to it. The reasons for this are twofold. The first concerns the limitations of the data and Wald's methods of overcoming them. His first method is to acknowledge the limitations but to go ahead anyway. His second method is to solve the lack of fit between census districts and constituencies, by aggregating constituencies into surrogate voting units. The virtue of ecological correlations as a technique depends on the relation between individual behaviour and the context in which it takes place. While one may have misgivings about the value of the measures which Wald has derived from the census and still more doubt about his denominational measures, one thing we can be certain about is that electors vote in a particular constituency for particular candidates. Wald's method sacrifices this genuine political context and further decreases the weight to be given to his findings as against other kinds of evidence.

None of this would matter if he were tentative in his conclusions, but he is not. Having established that his surrogate measures of nonconformist strength are the best predictor of non-unionist voting in his surrogate electoral units, Wald goes on to construct an exaggerated picture of the denominational basis of the Victorian parties and to elaborate an entirely fanciful model of the effects of the establishment of non-sectarian schooling after 1870 on the future prospects of the Liberal Party. To acknowledge that nonconformists were strong Liberals and in many places provided the cutting edge of mid-Victorian radicalism is not to say that the Liberal Party was a nonconformist party. It was as much a denominational coalition as a class one and embraced evangelicals, broad churchmen, Erastian Whigs, agnostics, anti-clericals and popular atheists as well as a variety of nonconformists.

The waning of militant dissent undoubtedly had an effect on the vigour of the Liberal Party. What I do not accept is that a subterranean process of socialization among successive generations of board school pupils undermined the confessional basis of Liberalism. Nor was class a residual factor emerging only with the receding tide of religious feeling. Through the 1880s and 1890s politicians at all points of the political compass became increasingly aware of the urgency of social reform for many of their constituents. Class became important because people made it so. In some parts of the country the Liberals came to terms with the claims of organized labour for parliamentary representation and adopted an economic and social programme which appealed to and won working-class support. The question is why this adaptation did not occur across the country as a whole, why some Liberals refused to concede the claims of labour, or some sections of organized labour refused to accept the terms of the bargain. Why in fact the Labour Party was there at all to profit from the divisions of the Liberals and the further extension of the franchise in 1918.

The answer is not going to emerge from the analysis of aggregate national data, because, contrary to the received wisdom, Britain was not (and is not) a homogeneous country. Even within a single industry conditions varied critically; whereas a Lib-Lab pact could be put together in the East Midlands coalfield no such thing proved possible in South Wales. Nor is it simply a question of the failure of leadership: there were certainly failures of nerve and imagination at the top. But the difficulties of the leadership reflected divisions at the local level and the differences in the circumstances confronting local leadership. The only way to get at these is through the painstaking reconstruction of local and regional political history in the manner of Pelling, Thompson, Clarke and Waller. Parties may outlive the nexus of interests on which they were established and suffer dramatic electoral eclipse. The electoral shock may be delayed. But the process is not invisible. It can be traced through internal party rows, contested nominations, local defections, the appearance of independent candidates and so forth. The fate of the party by not so much with the national as with the local leadership. How far this remains the case in the age of television may be the critical question for the Labour Party. If Lloyd George could not educate his party, what hope has Neil Kinnock?

Hassle on the hustings

Craig Brown

CAROL THATCHER

Diary of an Election: With Margaret Thatcher on the Campaign Trail
162pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £6.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0 283 99068 6

Two of the most popular essay titles set by tired teachers to young children are "What I Did On My Holidays" and "A Day in the Life of a Penny". The completed essays tend to be episodic, over-excited and ungrammatical. Nosiness is all that keeps the teacher reading: the unguarded child might let a variety of cats out of family bags, revealing Dad as an alcoholic, Mum as a nag or little brother as a swank.

Carol Thatcher's *Diary of an Election* shares most of the characteristics of this type of essay. Like the heroines in *June* and *Schoolfriend* or *Bunty*, wherever she goes, a bubble containing exclamation marks galore goes with her. Everything merits a gasp of admiration or astonishment. Though everyone else in the world knew that there would be a June election, Carole, awoken in Tasmania with the news of her mother's announcement, flew into a terrible tizz: "My emotions were muddled between amazement at hearing that the balloon had gone up", she recollects, "and horror at having my slumbers interrupted with such a bombshell."

What made the balloon such a bombshell was that Carol, rumoured to be a journalist on the *Daily Telegraph*, had been commissioned by an astute publisher to hand in her account of "What I Did At The Hustings" on the night of June 10, the very day of the General Election. Before she left Tasmania, her mother telephoned her. "I don't know if you've heard" she said, "'Yes', I interrupted, and lobbed in, 'Why now?'"

The gist of her reply was the one that she gave everyone – about uncertainty and speculation. She added that certain international investments weren't being made in Britain because the perpetual state of election jitters was scaring off the prospective investors, which was bad for the country, the economy and the pound.

Not content to rest on her laurels with this quality of revelation, Carol flew back to England, spending the first, quiet days of the election brushing up her English. "These are very much early days in the campaign, with a little sniping but no real getting to grips with the issues' dogfights." But once the campaign got going, Carol followed "Mum" everywhere – out of coaches and into factories, out of factories and into coaches, always with her coached and well-couched facts. "Her mission between now and polling day", Carol reveals dispassionately, "is to sell the achievements of the last four years and to expose the Labour Party's Manifesto as the devastating document and extreme left-wing set of proposals it really is."

When Carol gets into her stride and begins to feel relaxed at her typewriter (or – perhaps – Dictaphone) a tinge of the hippy enters her vocabulary: "hassles", "junkets" and even "vibes" abound, and "Mum" is at one point "a touch uptight" and at another "positively knackered". But the moment "Mum" is attacked, Carol switches back to the language of the Head Girl at St Hilda's. Of the persistent questions of a viewer on BBC's *Nationwide* programme, she says "The best way to describe what went on the air is that it represented an example of the most crass nastiness and discourtesy shown to a Prime minister on a television programme."

Is one's nosiness rewarded? Alas, no. Carol has made every effort to find out what might interest the reader, and then she has omitted it. On page 130, she tells us, "Dad met the Militant Tendency", but that is where she ends her story. The one slightly ticklish fact in the book is that the Prime Minister signed "Yours sincerely, Margaret Thatcher" on her election address no less than eight times before getting it right. Otherwise, The Rt Hon Penny, passed from rally to studio to walkabout, emerges as gleaming, unchipped and brassy as when she set forth.

Developments in British Politics (326pp. Macmillan. £15, paperback £5.95. 0 333 35184 3) edited by Henry Drucker, Patrick Dunleavy, Andrew Gamble and Gillian Peele is divided into three parts: "The Constants", which contains, among others, a contribution on "The Resurgence of Ideology", "New Worlds" which deals with such subjects as "The Police". The third part is on "The Political Science of British Politics".

The eyes and ears of Number Ten

Victoria Glendinning

MARCIA FALKENDER

Downing Street in Perspective
280pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0 297 78107 3

In her acknowledgments at the beginning of *Downing Street in Perspective*, Marcia Falkender mentions those people who researched, taped, transcribed, typed and "helped with all the tedious jobs involved in putting a book together". A book is not something that is written, then; it is "put together", and there is a fair bit of tedium in the process. It follows that this is not an inspired publication; and the number of sentences beginning "As I said before" suggests that there was only so much material that the author had, or chose, to impart.

In this second book of reminiscence she covers the years 1970 to 1976, beginning when the Labour Party was out of office and ending with Harold Wilson's resignation after two short administrations. She begins with the resignation too – that surprise move that "hit the nation like a bolt from the blue". This event is, as the blurb says, "recalled dramatically". But drama was present only for the ignorant, since his Political Secretary and others had apparently been in his confidence in this regard for over a year.

The most interesting and revealing parts of the book are in fact the author's meditations on her special role as Political Secretary, "political aide" and "political adviser" to Harold Wilson. It was a position she fought hard to establish, she refers briefly here to "daily struggles" for recognition back in 1964 when she inaugurated Labour's Political Office inside Number 10 to be the "eyes and ears" of the PM against considerable opposition. Some of the struggles were about "trivial details", such as "whether or not I qualified for tea on a tray in china tea cups or coffee in a silver pot served in my room, or just a mug of tea made upstairs". There was also trouble with the civil servants when the Political Office first used the authoritative 10 Downing Street headed writing-paper for its own communications.

Nothing in this book diminishes or seeks to diminish the public image of the author as a very efficient and very determined *femme blonde* with a compelling "need to know". She enjoyed off-side diplomacy: in 1975 she passed unofficial messages from Wilson to the Prime Minister of Israel about a sudden shift in American policy on Israel: "Such activities were understandably viewed with hostility and irritation by the Foreign Office, and caused great difficulty both then and subsequently."

Ripping yarns in plenty, then, but no very important revelations. Wilson's later campaigns were facilitated by lots of lucozade and theatrical coaching from Stanley Baker and John Mortimer (there was, perhaps, a touch of Rumpole about him in those days); the strawberry jam and angel-cakes at Chequers are home-made and very nice; Mr Heath greatly improved the bathroom arrangements at Chequers and the WCs at Number 10.

It's not all triumph. There are griefs, and not all of them connected with money. But after the Land Deals ordeal – to which she devotes a chapter – her brother's plans for the profitable disposal of the land became impossible: "What was more, the financial security I thought it would provide, for my retirement was not achieved; nor has it been to this day." The most human story is about a meeting in Glasgow in 1975, at which Wilson asked her to fetch him some information; leaving the unfamiliar room by what she thought was the door, she found herself in a dark cupboard. She didn't come out. She stayed there till the end of the meeting.

Wilson's controversial peer-making is simply not discussed, though her own elevation is mentioned briefly and sadly. She accepted her peerage with mixed feelings, hoping with Harold Wilson that the public acknowledgment would cause her to be seen in "a different context" after the furore over the Land Deals affair. "But it did not work out as I had hoped. I was very sorry then and I still am, though I hope that one day it will." Politics is not such fun. Myself, I'd rather sit in a dark cupboard.

The book ends with brief character sketches of "Leading Labour Personalities". In view of recent preoccupations they may be worth noting. "Tony Benn has become a cult hate figure almost in the way that Shirley Williams has become a cult love figure. In his case there is, of course, more reason." Michael Foot's "appearance of simplicity" is in direct contradiction to the "real" Michael, who is "arrogant rather than humble, apparently lacking in self-doubt". Roy Jenkins is "unlike most senior politicians in that he is a man with friends". Shirley Williams has an ability to project an idealized version of herself, a myth that "fits where it touches"; she is less "feminine" than Mrs Thatcher.

The general effect of this book, it may be deduced, is not of political or personal sophistication but of its absence. Yet in spite of the score-keeping and the gangings-up, it seems emphatically not a matter of children playing at grown-ups, but of grown-ups playing at grown-ups. If that is true of the experienced, capable, successful Marcia Falkender it may, disquietingly, be true of everyone else.

Subfusc Scarlett

Julia O'Faolain

ANNE EDWARDS

The Road to Tara: The Life of Margaret Mitchell
369pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0 340 32348 5

Those who fail with the sword often use the pen to transmute old shame to old glory and writers from the American South were long fond of the trick. This is understandable. After all, the South is the only place where American citizens lost a war on home ground. Two anecdotes from Anne Edwards's life of Margaret Mitchell make the point.

The first concerns a moment in 1911 when the ten-year-old Margaret, who had heard tales of Southern gallantry since birth, discovered "to her shocked disbelief" that the South had not won the war. Her informants were black field hands on her aunts' cotton plantation and though the biography leaves the story there one longs to know more. In what spirit, for instance, did those connoisseurs of defeat pass on the stale news? The second incident was an exercise in symbolic rehabilitation. In December 1939 the film of Mitchell's novel, *Gone with the Wind*, had its world première in Atlanta, Georgia; a statewide holiday was proclaimed by the governor, and film celebrities arriving for the event were watched by crowds "larger than the combined armies that fought the battle of Atlanta". Confederate flags waved; the band played "Dixie", and for the entire state of Georgia it was, writes Ms Edwards, "like winning the Battle of Atlanta seventy-five years late". Those whom history will not vindicate can look to the movies.

Fair enough, but should a new biography continue the process and pile legend upon legend? In her preface, Edwards claims that her choice of subject was due to "circumstances that seem in retrospect to have been guided by fate". This turns out to mean that having written a life of Vivien Leigh and a sequel to *Gone with the Wind* "as a book which . . . would then be adapted for a screenplay", she turned next to Margaret Mitchell, who captivated her with "the aura of mystery, defiance and drama that surrounded her extraordinary life and her tragic and dramatic death".

Recycling researched material is a respectable practice and Edwards might have been wiser to admit that this was what she was doing. As it is, the hype leads to disappointment. One looks in vain in *The Road to Tara* for mystery, and the "tragic and dramatic death" boils down to Mitchell's being killed by a car some blocks from home at the age of forty-eight.

Margaret (Peggy) Mitchell was born into a comfortable Atlanta family. Her father was a lawyer, her maternal grandmother a wholesale grocer and she had an aunt with magnolia skin who injected her with a dose of Southern resentment and romance. Her mother, a feminist, urged her to get an education but died during Peggy's first year at Smith College. She promptly abandoned plans to be a doctor, dropped out and returned to Atlanta, where she met Red Upshaw, her first husband and the model for Rhett Butler. He was a student and an occasional bootlegger who was considered "wild" and "dashing". Peggy, a flirt, had hitherto enjoyed "pushing her beaus to the very edge of control – at which crucial moment she would become all righteous indignation". The marriage broke up after a few months. Upshaw left, came back and, after some teasing in the bedroom, battered Peggy, who had to be hospitalized. There was a divorce and in 1925 she married John Marsh, a journalist who encouraged her to become a reporter and later prodded her into writing her novel. Edwards notes that "Though Peggy gloried in . . . playing the Southern coquette, sex itself had been a painful, distressing experience . . . Marsh had made no demands and . . . she felt confident he would never take advantage of his position as her husband". Interestingly, having moved from a wild man to a tame one, she made her heroine, Scarlett, do the reverse. Romance is written by and for those who prefer prettification to analysis or action and, it is striking that Mitchell was propelled first by her mother who got her as far as Smith and then by Marsh. Daily, when she was writing her novel, she read him extracts which he would correct – and later she was touchy about rumours that he had helped write it.

Anne Edwards links the success of *Gone with the Wind* with the insecurities and gloom of the Depression. Its publication, she feels, "marked a real upturn . . . in the American people's pride in their own accomplishment". Seen as a "harbinger of . . . a national literature", she considers that it "celebrated the American past in a way that the novels of Willa Cather, William Faulkner, and Thomas Wolfe had not". Early reviewers compared it to the works of Hardy, Tolstoy and Dickens, but Scott FitzGerald considered it to have "none of the elements that make literature". Anne Edwards prefers to come down on neither side. Her last word on her second-last page is "Whether or not *Gone with the Wind* is a masterpiece has always been a matter of controversy".

Day-to-day chronicling is Edwards's forte and she informs us minutely about Margaret Mitchell's hypochondria, clothes and quarrels with her publishers, and about the mountains of letters she wrote to fans and reviewers – nearly 20,000 in four years. Flirting with them as once she had flirted with men, she frittered away the time and energies which might have gone into a second novel. *Gone with the Wind* had drained her: it was a brick of a book, a freak statistic which has outsold every work in hard cover except for the Bible.

Newspaperman report

O. R. McGregor

MICHAEL LEAPMAN

Barefaced Cheek: The apotheosis of Rupert Murdoch
269pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95
0 340 28211 8

In thirty-one years and from fairly small beginnings in Australia, Rupert Murdoch, now aged fifty-two, has put together a massive enterprise stretching over three continents. He publishes books, newspapers and periodicals, but his interests go far beyond the printed word: he controls television stations as well as an airline, and he is involved in industries which range from farming to oil and natural gas. The now fashionable attachment to mid-Victorian economic and moral notions may well create a market for the publications of a latter-day Samuel Smiles who will record and praise the achievements of today's exponents of the virtues of industry and self-help. Among these, Mr Murdoch will undoubtedly be in the front rank.

On any showing, Murdoch's career has been remarkable; hence it raises many questions. From the business and financial angle, what were the circumstances which favoured the expansion and profitability of his group? What desires have driven him, and do they stem from the protestant ethic or from a different sort of compulsion? Is his purchase of *The Times* perhaps to be interpreted as a modern example of conspicuous consumption, a form of costly entertainment which Murdoch offers daily to top people? Did he chiefly seek power or riches or may he simply take pleasure in running a successful business in which control remains in his own hands? How does his style of management compare with the practice of others past and present? Intriguing questions arise concerning the social status of entrepreneurs and of their different situations and ranking in Australia, Britain and the United States. Indeed, it would be easy to compile a long catalogue of such questions. Some, however, will wish to know what can be learned from Murdoch's conduct of newspapers in different parts of the world, about the conditions in which a free press can exist and about the actual relationships of proprietors with their editors and journalists. What light does the formation and behaviour of the Murdoch group shed upon possible answers to the question: ought governments to be empowered to scrutinize and regulate the buying and selling of newspapers on grounds other than the desire to restrict concentration and monopoly? Should a proprietor be able to do as he pleases with this form of property? Does the experience of those who have worked for Murdoch suggest that the ethics of journalism and the cohesiveness of its practitioners could effectively limit his power as a proprietor? How well or badly is the public interest in newspapers served by Murdoch's type of management?

Unhappily, Michael Leapman gives scant attention to such questions and provides in the course of far too long a book very little in the way of usable information for answering questions about Murdoch and his activities. It is difficult to infer from the text what questions Leapman had in mind to answer. What he provides is, first, a brief account of Murdoch's family background, though it seems to add little to what was already in print. Then there follows a historical narrative of episodes, limited very largely to Murdoch's dealings with newspapers and editors, strung out forlornly in the rest of the book like old underwear on a clothes line.

Leapman says that his information "is the product of more than 120 interviews in Britain, Australia and the United States". In order to protect confidences, none of these sources is named. Murdoch declined to talk to him "therefore descriptions of conversations and incidents in which [Rupert Murdoch] took part rely on the evidence of others present . . .". Much that this biography contains is accordingly second or third-hand reporting; the reader is given neither the means nor the opportunity to judge the reliability of the sources. The best that can be said is that Leapman writes brightly, thus making bearable a tedious recital of what is alleged to have happened and to have been said by participants in the course of this or that acquisition or business deal.

Because Leapman has no main theme, his documentation would be unhelpful even if it could be relied on, for it amounts mostly to no more than a patchwork of unrelated conversations. Oddly, he appears to have little interest in his subject's personality. It seems reasonable to think it unlikely that anyone could have Murdoch's achievements under his belt and be as dull, simple-minded and as crudely motivated as the cardboard figure which flops over from Leapman's pages. If indeed he is like that, an explanation, however tentative, would be fascinating. Even the title of the book is puzzling: the reader is given few grounds for believing that Mr Murdoch has a habit of insolence (or is "barefaced cheek" a delicate reference to page 37) and none for crediting him with divinity.

Stone unturned

John Stokes

CAREY SCHOFIELD

Jagger
248pp. Methuen. £7.95.
0 413 51580 X

In medieval pictures of the dance of death, the living join in promenade with the dead. The living are arranged in hierarchy – from monarch to common man – while the dead may be either a group or a single figure, a lolloping skeleton. The moral is less a call to repentance than a reminder that in the company of death all are equal. As the Rolling Stones sang it in the early days, "Have you seen your mother, baby, standing in the shadow?" – a point made more blackly in the 1970s, when they had become better acquainted with mortality. By the time they recorded "Dancing with Mr D", Mick Jagger had become both victim and threat, dancing with himself.

Brief lives dominate Carey Schofield's dutiful celebration of the star's fortieth birthday. Brian Jones drowns at the bottom of his Sussex swimming pool, Tara Browne has a fatal car accident, providing a lyric for the Beatles, Meredith Hunter, a black Californian, is stabbed by Hell's Angels at the Altamont Festival, and Brian Epstein falls prey to his own private demons; only Keith Richard keeps on taking chances. It's all, as we used to say, too much, though to make too much of it now would be to play straight into the hands of Jagger, whose giggles and grunts often leave it to others, less canny than himself, to articulate his significance. Faced with a trickster, Ms Schofield sensibly adopts a calm gaze and applies some rudimentary sociology.

Jagger was born in Dartford in 1943. Growing up in the London suburbs in the 1950s, with no history apart from that which your parents were anxious to forget, fantasies were needed: why not make believe that south of the river could double for the south side of Chicago, that Ealing Broadway could reverberate like its New York namesake? Jagger's later incarnations are far less fun than the inventions that he once shared with his generation: aristocratic debauchery has always had its place among middle-class ambitions, but Chuck Berry on the tube was a more exhilarating ride than the jaded *salonier's* cruise to Mustique. Jagger's first stop was the LSE and a flat in Edith Grove where, like many students of the time, he cultivated squalor. For Jagger and friends it didn't last the statutory three years; the time was ripe, the people too.

Jagger has always surrounded himself with educators in the ways of the world. At the start they included Alexis Korner with his encyclopedic knowledge of the blues, Chelsea designer Christopher Gibbs, art impresario Robert Fraser. Later in the 1960s, other mentors appeared, like the self-styled "Miles", a busy entrepreneur who ran Indica bookshop and edited *International Times*, and Donald Cammell, who wrote and produced the film *Performance* in which Jagger starred, in 1968. The third part is on "The Political Science of British Politics".



Mike Jagger in Cologne, reproduced from The Rolling Stones: The Last Tour *(128pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £5.95. 0 283 98980 7) with photography by Philip Kamin and text by James Karnbach.*

Schofield has collected from Jagger's friends suggest that theirs are the memoirs that publishers should be queueing for, rather than the autobiography that Jagger, again with help, has recently sold and is now beginning to compose.

Cammell's *Performance* is a typical 1960s artefact. When underworld meets underground in Powis Square, London backchat of the "United we stand, divided we're lumbered" variety (midway between Pinter and *Minder*) runs up against psychedelic vacuity. In a suitably numbed version of himself, Jagger ("I just wanna get my skull completely empty") plays a retired rock star whose libertine lifestyle provokes the Cockney sneer: "Comical little geezer, you'll look funny when you're fifty."

Half a million attended the Hyde Park concert in 1969; maybe half a dozen heard Shelley's words "We decay / like corpses in a charnel" when Jagger in Dartford/Delta dialect drawled *Adoneis* in memory of Brian Jones. In the 1970s Tennyson's Tithonus took over. "Why should a man desire in any way/To vary from the kindly race of men"? Suburban boys who had grown up in the 1950s knew exactly why: money and girls were the right answer. For Jaggers, it seems, they still are. Schofield collapses recent history into a mere fifty pages, chronicling no fresh scandals. Bianca Perez Moreno de Macias ("an old-style courtesan", in the loyal words of friend Cammell) comes and goes, a million namesake poorer; Prince Rupert Loewenstein, merchant banker, comes and stays; Jerry Hall, Texan model and horse-breeder, comes, goes, and comes back again. Charlie Watts, the Rolling Stones drummer, loses his hair, Mick takes up jogging and, in a sad vignette, his daughter goes through a difficult time at school.

Back in the suburbs, Schofield suggests, contemporaries from Dartford Grammar, now solicitors and university lecturers, are struggling with mortgages and career problems. "Mick Jagger", she hazards, "must be the only one whose present life would be envied by his fifteen-year-old self." In Jagger's generation there were all manners of energies for his jumps and japes to stir. After all, "Life was never better than/In 1963 [. . .] Between the end of the Chatterley ban / And the Beatles' first LP." In 1964 we asked for more, and got the Rolling Stones. You can't always get what you want, but sometimes – even in the suburbs – you get what you need.

A general out of step

John B. Dunlop

PETRO GRIGORENKO
Memoirs
Translated by Thomas P. Whitney
462pp. Collins. £15.
0 00 272276 3

Let it be said at the outset: this is an important and in many ways fascinating book. Born in 1907 into a poor Ukrainian peasant family, Petro Grigorenko rose to the rank of major-general in the Soviet army, serving *with distinction in the war against* Hitler. A fervent communist and convinced Stalinist, he greeted Khrushchev's famous 1956 "secret speech", which initiated the process of *de-Stalinization in the USSR, with* shock and dismay. Yet five years later, in September 1961, we find this erstwhile true believer speaking out at a party conference of the *Lenin District of Moscow, advocating the* democratization of Soviet elections and the responsibility to the voters of those elected. By 1964, "a commission of experts presided over by *Academician Snezhevsky, with the* special participation of a Professor named Lunts" determined that Grigorenko was insane, and he underwent the first of two gruelling *incarcerations in a prison mental* hospital. In 1977, Grigorenko was permitted to go to the United States for an operation and, while there, was deprived of his Soviet citizenship.

Grigorenko calls this volume of memoirs a "confession". The term is apt, since the book's essential purpose is to recount how a morally alert individual became gradually enmeshed in the webs of ideological fanaticism, from which he began to extricate himself only at the age of fifty. *Memoirs* is the story of a spiritual journey which took Grigorenko from a boyhood commitment to Orthodox Christianity to a fanatical adherence to Marxism-Leninism and then back to Orthodoxy, and to a moderate form of Ukrainian nationalism. The book traces this journey with meticulous care and relentless honesty of detail.

Raised from a "Red" village in the civil war, Grigorenko was naturally inclined to be sympathetic to the new Bolshevik state of "workers and peasants". A reading of Bukharin's *The ABCs of Communism* provided a particularly strong stimulus for an awakening faith in communism:

> The simplicity of its concept shocked me. The history of humanity, it said, is the history of class warfare. Until the working class – the proletariat – *entered the arena of history, society* was divided into the oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors, the ruling class, preserved their own privileges and exploited the other classes. *The oppressed did not dare* even to dream of the benefits enjoyed by the oppressors. . . . The proletariat takes power into its hands not, like the classes ruling before it, to make eternal its ruling position, but to raise everyone to its own level, to transform society into a unified collective of workers in which there will be no difference between mental and physical labor. . . .

And Grigorenko recalls: "We received such ideas enthusiastically. The happiness of all people was our goal." It took him some forty years to realize that this new religion was false.

When Stalin emerged as leader in the late 1920s, Grigorenko saw him as an embodiment of the new creed. "I *agreed with Stalin's every word. He* liberated me from all doubts." Grigorenko believed so intensely in communism and in Stalin (the two were identified in his mind) that he was *prepared "to accept any crime" in their* name.

Yet, as he realizes in retrospect, people were always at work seeking to cure him of his enthrallment. Thus his father and uncle spoke scathingly to him of the forced collectivization of agriculture and predicted the catastrophic famine which in fact shortly ensued. After the war, certain reformist Marxists, friends of the family, sought to show him the difference between Lenin's prescriptions and the present state of affairs. Vasily Tesiya, a graduate of the Institute of Red Professors, informed him that "communism did not exist in the Soviet Union and that the men ruling the country were ordinary gangsters. . . ". A staff writer for *Pravda*, Moisei Chernenko, taught him "to understand current events, to get to the truth, and, in reading the Soviet press, to read between the lines". An encounter with Soviet antisemitism dealt a blow to Grigorenko's "sociologically naive views of people".

It was, however, the Khrushchev period which opened the first serious fissures in Grigorenko's belief system. By undermining the monolithic Stalinist world-view, Khrushchev unintentionally brought into focus the marked failure of the Soviet political system and Soviet society. A man of action, Grigorenko decided to do something about it.

It was Grigorenko's speech at the Lenin district party conference in 1961, referred to earlier, which seems to have been the decisive milestone in his spiritual odyssey. The Soviet general *who gave the impromptu speech was* still a dedicated communist. His savaging by those present, including the party Secretariat member Boris Ponomaryov, and the sanctions later *taken against him, convinced him that* the country was indeed ruled by "gangsters . . . dissolute, demoralized men". "More and more", he recalls, "the idea entered my head that the social structure created in our country was not a socialist one, that the ruling party was not communist."

This insight prompted him to re-examine the writings of Lenin. To his growing discomfiture, he began to realize that the seeds of the party's undemocratic behaviour had been planted by Lenin himself, but for a long time he refused to accept the logic of this realization, ie, that there is substantial continuity between Leninism and Stalinism.

By the summer of 1963, the major-general had, incredibly, resolved "to battle the leadership of the CPSU [*Communist Party of the Soviet* Union]". Soon he was mailing anonymous lampoons to *Pravda* and, together with his son, organizing an underground alliance for the rebirth of *true communism. In a series of leaflets*, he attacked such abuses as the Soviet people's lack of rights and the omnipotence of bureaucratic power. Eventually we find him handing out leaflets at the Hammer and Sickle factory in Moscow. To the astonished workers, he declared, "I'm tired of being afraid." On one occasion, wearing his general's uniform, he left a leaflet at the Pavletsky Station. Soon, inevitably, the KGB was on his trail and, just as inevitably, he was arrested.

The Soviet authorities were understandably puzzled and disturbed by the case of this general turned dissident. Semichastny, chairman of the KGB, and his first deputy, Zakharov, were both present when Grigorenko was brought to prison – an unusual honour for a political prisoner. The entire Politburo reportedly listened to the tapes of his interrogation by a KGB official. And it was decided to declare this general with reformist illusions to be insane.

Freed from the mental asylum during the confusion accompanying the change of leadership in 1964 (*Khrushchev had not only wanted to* keep him in the *psikhushka* but insisted that this insane man be demoted in military rank), Grigorenko soon entered the mainstream of the nascent *Soviet human rights movement.* To earn a living, the ex-general had to work in vegetable warehouses in the Crimea and Moscow, watched over at all times by "four athletic young men". *Despite the surveillance*, he met Bukovsky, Ginzburg, Yakir, and other leading dissenters; Sakharov sent him a copy of his now-famous memorandum; Solzhenitsyn invited him out for a night-long chat ("Pyotr Grigoryevich, it is your duty before the people and before God to write the history of the last war. . . . You have to deglamorize the war, show it as it really was"). In what was perhaps Grigorenko's most notable feat as a dissenter, he championed the cause of the Crimean Tatars, a displaced nation of 200,000 who had been forcibly removed from their homeland by Stalin. It is no exaggeration to say that Grigorenko is a national hero to this people.

In May 1969, Grigorenko was arrested for a second time, and on this occasion the régime seems to have *resolved* to break its intrepid opponent. He now spent forty-nine harrowing months in various prison hospitals which had "sprouted like mushrooms" during Andropov's tenure as chairman of the KGB. It was during this incarceration that Grigorenko regained and deepened his boyhood religious faith.

Internment in a mental hospital, Grigorenko observes, is far worse than being interrogated as a criminal:

> If you say to the interrogator that there is no freedom of the press in *the USSR, that means that you are a* slanderer, a criminal. If you say the same thing to a doctor-psychiatrist he says that this is delirium, a mental illness. If you say to the interrogator that elections should be made elections . . . that means you are a criminal. . . . If you repeat the same thing to a psychiatrist he will ascribe to you "concepts of reforms". . . . And so you have a whole clump of symptoms of schizophrenia. In order to be cured of such "illnesses," you have to renounce your own convictions. . . . And if you are unwilling to thus recuperate, you will be subjected to an indefinitely long "treatment" – lifelong. This gives you something to think about.

In unemotional tones, Grigorenko describes the horrors and indignities to which political prisoners are subjected in Soviet prison mental hospitals. The prisoner who refuses to take orally the *drug aminazin (similar to the Western* Thorazine) has his buttocks slashed with a surgeon's knife and the drug forcibly injected, a process which causes painful nodes to erupt, making walking, *sitting*, and *sleeping* extremely difficult. Another drug, haloperidol (similar to the Western Haldol) can cause asphyxia and body tremors. These medications, it should be emphasized, were *forcibly* administered to mentally healthy individuals interned solely for their political or religious beliefs. As for Grigorenko, he was forbidden to have a pen or pencil, was taken to the bathroom so rarely that he became incontinent, and was kept in cramped quarters with the genuinely insane: "For the first two months they confined me in a cell of six square meters with a delirious patient who had committed a heinous murder. It is not pleasant to spend the whole day staring into the face of a man who either sits motionless with a blank expression or speaks incessantly. It is even less pleasant to awaken and see this person poised over you ready to hurl himself upon you." Who among us could survive a week of such "treatment"? Yet Grigorenko endured four years of it, *did not break*, and was ultimately released from this hell. (He believes that intercessions by Solzhenitsyn and President Nixon were especially helpful.)

While Grigorenko's spiritual journey is the central focus of these memoirs, the book contains much else that is of interest. Military historians will find his account of Stalin's purge of the military, of the Second World War, and of his experiences at the Frunze Military Academy absorbing reading. It is noteworthy that Grigorenko has a low opinion of many hallowed Soviet generals such as Budyonny, Timoshenko and Zhukov, while he has great respect for others who are never mentioned, for example Shtern, who was shot during the purges. He has a special dislike of Zhukov, whose unparalleled ferocity and readiness "not to spare the men" endeared him to Stalin. Grigorenko also includes some fascinating paragraphs on Zhukov's role in Khrushchev's successful struggle against the "anti-party group".

There are also some enlightening pages on Brezhnev, whom Grigorenko met during the war. Brezhnev is described as utterly ruthless, a cynic and sycophant. He wanted to keep Grigorenko in a mental hospital in 1964, but it was too late; the general had already been released. "They let him out too soon! Too bad!" Brezhnev is said to have exclaimed. There are also brief descriptions of other Soviet leaders, including Kosygin, Khrushchev's defence minister, Malinovsky, and Demichev.

The book also contains elements of a love story. Grigorenko's second wife, Zinaida, herself the daughter of a communist true believer, consistently exhibited character, intelligence and integrity under unspeakably trying conditions. She now shares her husband's life in the emigration.

Grigorenko's *Memoirs* are somewhat uneven in style. Certain *sections, especially the description of* the Khrushchev years, make riveting reading. In some places, the narrative is less tightly structured. Always, however, it keeps one's interest.

Petro Grigorenko has gone to America to live among what he calls a "kind and proud people". From his much-deserved sanctuary, he, like Solzhenitsyn and the late Andrei Amalrik, issues the warning: "The West must never forget the Soviet Union's goal – world domination."

As for myself, I look to the day when a monument will be erected to this marvellous general in Kiev, capital of the Ukraine.

Surprise, surprise

Wolf Mendl

P. H. VIGOR
Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory
216pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 27977 0

One of the most serious problems in the current debate over national security and defence is the difficulty of knowing what the Russians really think and intend to do. For this we depend heavily on a handful of specialists who are students of Soviet affairs and have a command of the Russian language. P. H. Vigor is one of those few who can interpret the Russians to us and for this reason alone his book on the Soviet theory of blitzkrieg is to be welcomed.

To get the best out of this briskly written and forcefully argued study, the reader should peruse it carefully, otherwise he may jump to conclusions which the author himself avoids. The book is about Soviet military theory, not about Soviet policy and intentions. In the Soviet Union, unlike the West, strategy in the nuclear age remains essentially the business of professional military men. The soldier's job is to *think about the potential enemies of* the state; he must be prepared to fight the enemy and to overcome him in the event of hostilities. So it is natural that he should also try to devise war-winning strategies.

This is what the Soviet military theorists seek to do and Vigor shows from their writings how they have fastened on to the concept of the lightning war as the means with which to achieve their objectives. His principal contribution is to link the well-known tactics of the Soviet armed forces, which are designed for a mobile and fast-moving battle, to the Russian view that a war against a well-armed and technologically advanced opponent should be short.

Surprise is of the essence. There is no time for the niceties of formal declarations of war and slow-motion mobilization. Once the attack is launched, a concentration of forces, speed of advance and the weight of the blow, coming from an unexpected direction, are the decisive factors in winning the initial campaign. But that campaign should also be the only one and lead to a rapid conclusion of the war.

The Soviet model of blitzkrieg is *constructed on the basis of historical* experience and Vigor explains in the most interesting passages of the book how the Russian strategists are assiduous students of past wars, some *taken from their own* and others from the Prussian/German campaigns in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Profiting from the lessons of the past, contemporary Soviet military thinkers and planners have developed a strategy which is described in the last chapter on "A possible Soviet scenario for the perfect *Blitzkrieg*". According to Vigor's scenario, the Russian forces would have reached the environs of Hanover by 4am on Christmas Day, approximately four hours after the forward detachments first crossed the frontier from East Germany. But this is in the realm of speculation and does not take into account the inevitable frictions and fog of war, which not only affect the surprised defenders but also the best-laid plans of the attacker. More surprising still, the author hardly considers the possible psychological and physical impact of the great variety of nuclear weapons at the disposal of both sides.

One might also criticize the book for other reasons. They include minor *historical inaccuracies, such as the* wrong date of Suvorov's Italian campaign and the persistent reference to the "Treaty of Vienna" as having punctuated the Napoleonic Wars, when he must surely have meant the Treaty of Amiens (1802), and more substantial points such as the exaggerated importance attached to the Russian practice of blitzkrieg in the *invasion of Manchuria in the last few* days of the Second World War. The Japanese were in no position to offer serious resistance because the bulk of the Kwantung army had already been withdrawn and, in any case, they were in the process of looking for a way out of the conflict.

Vigor says that the Soviet Union has so far scrupulously observed this mandatory military commandment to all intending aggressors that "you must not bite off more than you can chew". This would be a reason why the Russians are more likely to plan an attack on Europe than on China. However, one wonders whether some Russians, at least, might not be asking themselves today whether Afghanistan has not turned out to be a particularly indigestible morsel.

That brings us to the fundamental *problem, which* is related to the political circumstances of the invasion of Afghanistan, but is not answered in this book. Vigor explains the Soviet theory of how to wage a war and is doing so he performs a very useful function, but he does not attempt to discuss seriously the even more important question: under what circumstances might the Soviet Union be tempted to launch its blitzkrieg? The distinction is crucial. Soviet theory could merely be an application of the ancient military axiom that attack is the best form of defence. On the other hand, its preoccupation with the concept of blitzkrieg might be a signal that the Soviet Union is really planning a war of aggression.

On this issue Vigor refrains from coming to a conclusion, though he leaves us with the impression that he takes a gloomy view of Russian intentions. The Soviet military do not make state policy; they are its instrument, although they constitute a very important interest group in the state. An unwary reader might mis themselves today whether Afghanistan has not turned out to be a particularly indigestible morsel.

commentary

Escape from illusion

Frances Spalding

Ben Nicholson: the years of *experiment* 1919–1939
Kettle's Yard, Cambridge

William and Ben Nicholson
Browse and Darby, 19 Cork Street, London W1

The Nicholsons
Crane Kalman Gallery, 178 Brompton Road, London SW3

When Ben Nicholson died in 1982 he was a respected but neglected figure: there had been no major showing of his art in this country since the 1969 Tate Gallery retrospective and none of the books on him was in print. This state of affairs may have been partly of the artist's own making, for critical opinion of his work had remained consistently high. Moreover, the situation has now been rectified by the concurrent appearance of three exhibitions: *William and Ben Nicholson* at Browse and Darby, Cork Street (until 30 July); *The Nicholsons* at Crane Kalman, Knightsbridge, celebrating an artistic genealogy that spans six generations (until 30 July); and the third and most important, the retrospective at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, which examines the inter-war years, the most crucial in Nicholson's development.

All three exhibitions suggest that Ben Nicholson's relationship with his father, Sir William, was complex, that it both impeded and directed his early career. After three-and-a-half terms at the Slade during 1910–11, he spent the next seven years producing little, travelling abroad – mostly for reasons of health. He dissociated himself from *the talented generation that he mixed* with at the Slade and from the arguments over Post-Impressionism then disrupting the elegant naturalism that his father practised. "I was in the painting world and trying to get out", he later recalled, for both his parents as well as his uncle were artists. Wanting to escape, he was nevertheless bound by admiration for the "poetic idea" expressed in *his father's still lifes and* landscapes. When in 1918 Ben Nicholson began to devote himself seriously to painting, it was automatically Sir William's precepts that he followed.

At first glance, paintings like "The Lustre Vase" and "Blue Bowl in Shadow" at Browse and Darby and "The Red Necklace" at Kettle's Yard *could* be mistaken for the elder Nicholson's work. They maintain an undisturbed equilibrium; the concentration on the single object, the even lighting and low tones create an *Old Master* style untouched by Post-Impressionism. Mostly however, they lack Sir William's fluent touch and exhibit that suffocating illusionism from which Ben Nicholson afterwards sought escape. None of these pre-1920 paintings was included in the 1969 retrospective as they were thought by Charles Harrison, the selector, to have "little relevance" to Nicholson's subsequent development. He now admits, however, in the Browse and Darby catalogue, that their restrained sensibility was later "successfully reapplied to the pursuit of the modern". They also suggest that the origin of Ben's belief in the painting as object, with an independent life of its own, stems from his father's example. Sir William's stated aim was:

> the reduction of accessories to a minimum . . . the constant simplification of all redundance – concentration on the real subject . . . the picture isn't a real thing – it's an illusion, a grouped thing – it's as definite a thing as a violet or a rose.

What from this idea should take Ben Nicholson had not satisfactorily resolved in 1919, when contact with Vorticism gave him the urge "to bust to the sophistication all around me". At Kettle's Yard is a profile portrait influenced by Wyndham Lewis's stylized drawing, its sombre colouring, on the other hand, looks back to the 1890s and the vogue for Velázquez. Two years later Nicholson has discarded this unhappy marriage of styles in favour of the crude drawing and tart colour found in "Pink House in the Snow" (1921). This and other paintings at Cambridge, together with "Vineyard in Winter" at Crane Kalman, give an indication of the various methods he explored during the early 1920s; as the artist recalled, "it was a very important period of fast and furious experiment".

His subsequent assimilation of *native and European influences is well* charted at Kettle's Yard. Jeremy Lewison's catalogue (80pp. £7.50. 0 907074 17 0) not only extends understanding of Nicholson's art in *relation to his time but is also a model* of clarity and condensed information. The influence of Nicholson's first wife Winifred is, however, still underplayed, and one is therefore glad *that she occupies a central role in the* Crane Kalman show. Like Ben, she too came from an artistic family, her grandfather, George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle, having been associated *with the Pre-Raphaelites. She*, perhaps even more than the Vorticists, provided the antidote to Sir William's nonchalant art and out-of-date dandyism. Her unaffected directness and musical use of colour encouraged her husband's search for pictorial immediacy; at a time when he was unable to see any way forward, her originality proved infectious and stimulating.

With Christopher Wood, Ben and Winifred Nicholson developed a lyrical and apparently naive approach to landscape painting, further encouraged by their discovery in 1928 of the primitive artist Alfred Wallis. Though this style contained many elements that Ben Nicholson later developed, he was too much his father's son to remain content for long with its spontaneous, child-like vision. His meeting with and subsequent marriage to Barbara Hepworth and his growing familiarity with a European avant-garde brought an increase of confidence and fastidiousness. The stumbling, unassertive line in his work of the early 1920s takes on an assured flourish when incised into the gesso ground in "Girl at Mirror" of 1933. Like his father's control of tone, this linear elegance displays a certain vanity; it allows the artist to parade his sensitivity and invites the spectator similarly to indulge his or her response.

The appearance of the free-floating line coincides with that of the mirror image. This, like Nicholson's *paintings*, operates both as object and illusion. Combined with the influence of Braque and Picasso, it encouraged Nicholson's interest in shifting depth and ambiguous planar relationships. *His first relief*, in which the illusion of depth becomes a reality, hangs at Kettle's Yard next to "Musical Instruments", suggesting that the former is merely a further abstraction *on the motif of the guitar*, the sound-hole becoming the carved circle. Next by hangs one of the white reliefs which brought these years of experiment to a climax. Its projecting rectangle, dropped down slightly from the edge of the relief, suggests weight and, by contrast, gives buoyancy to the incised circle. Nowhere else in these three shows do we find such quintessential *expression of* taste, such reduction of means, such concentration on something as definite "as a violet or a rose".

Ben Nicholson: the years of experiment 1919–1939 remains at Kettle's Yard until August 29 and then travels to Cartwright Hall, Bradford (September 10 to October 9); the Royal Museum, *Canterbury* (October 24 to November 26), and Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery (December 2 to January 8, 1984).

The Tate Gallery is to mount the largest exhibition yet held of the work of John Piper from November 30 to January 22, 1984, covering all aspects of his work in painting, drawing, design *and the theatre.*



"Pink House in the Snow", c.1921, by Ben Nicholson, from the exhibition at Kettle's Yard reviewed here.

Sitting pretty

Katherine Duncan-Jones

SHAKESPEARE
Cymbeline
BBC2

While few modern readers of *Cymbeline* would go the whole way with Johnson in his refusal to "waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility", it is undeniable that any modern director of the play must make some positive decisions about how to deal with this clogged, often obscure, and highly complicated romance. What Elijah Moshinsky decides to do, in the BBC 2 production, is to impose on the cluttered world of Shakespeare's Ancient Britain the lucid visual images of the great Dutch Masters. This *produces some delightful effects*, especially in the opening scenes of the play. The Second Gentleman, who asks all those helpful questions about the status quo in Cymbeline's court, *becomes a dignified Rembrandt old* lady in a ruff (Aimee Delamain). Claire Bloom makes an icily beautiful Queen, especially when proposing experiments on live animals to her *leather-bonneted Doctor* (Hugh Thomas). Imogen sitting alone waiting for news of her exiled husband is a Van Dyck beauty in a Vermeer interior. These images, and many more, are *what is gained. What is lost, however*, is almost all the poetry, a good deal of the action, and all the sweet poignancy which made this a favourite play of Keats, Swinburne and *Tennyson. Exterior scenes are kept* to a minimum, though the text would seem to call for many. The mountains of Wales are for some reason presented as the steppes of Russia. Instead of a *cave, the Welsh exiles inhabit* a comfortable if plain dacha, so the vital contrast between the court and the pastoral world is lost. The most painful casualty is Fidele's funeral, which happens inside the dacha with the princes squatting uncomfortably over the corpse. Instead of promising a perpetual strewing of "fairest flowers / Whilst *summer lasts*", the boys thrust two dusty-looking dried flowers into Imogen's hands, and leave it at that. The Snow White-like domesticity of the pastoral episode is also eliminated; here is no "neat cookery", with Fidele cutting the vegetables into "chiarcters". Helen Mirren's Imogen, more at ease as distressed boy than as chaste wife, is clearly no home-maker.

Because of its emphasis on painterly tableaux, this production is overwhelmingly static. Characters seem loath to rise from their high-backed chairs, and with a few exceptions, such as Cymbeline (Richard Johnson, looking like George V) and Belarius (Michael Gough), are apt to converse in whispers. Posthumus, (Michael Pennington), sitting at a still-life breakfast in Philario's elegant palazzo, scarcely looks up to receive Imogen's letter and Iachimo's report on the outcome of the wager. The dignified Lucius (Graham Crowden) declares war on Britain without rising from his seat at table. That useful messenger Pisanio, instead of being constantly on the move between Wales and Lud's Town, is often seen seated as he reads vital letters. Cloten (Paul Jesson), here presented as lisping and foppish, meditates rape and murder while lolling on his bed in the firelight. This immobility cannot be entirely explained by the constraints of the medium. Opportunities for close-up are often missed. We have no detailed view of the diamond ring and bracelet exchanged by Imogen and Posthumus and surprisingly we are not allowed to see either the "mole cinque-spotted" on Imogen's left breast or the "sanguine star" on Guiderius's shoulder.

Overall, the gentle, almost sentimental texture of the play is denied, in favour of an attempted *latentity which becomes rather* wearisome. The play offers repeated softenings of Shakespeare's earlier work. Iachimo, for instance, is a Tarquin who makes an inventory of Lucrece's bedroom furniture, rather than raping her – an Iago whose provocation of jealousy is bantering rather than malign. But here Robert Lindsay's Iachimo, in a black leather travelling outfit which makes it appear that he has left his Jacobean motor bike parked outside Cymbeline's palace, is clearly intended to present real menace; and what is more, it is by no means clear that Imogen dislikes his attentions. Her "What ho, Pisanio" in the attempted seduction scene is so *sotto voce* that the lady scarcely protests at all, and her restless slumbers in the bedchamber scene are, the *Radio Times* preview suggested, intended to make us see Iachimo's visit as an enactment of her sexual fantasies. It is odd, though, that we see so much of Iachimo's nakedness, and so little of hers; odd, too, that Posthumus suddenly plants a kiss on the cheek of the British Lord to whom he has described the outcome of the battle with the Romans. Moshinsky seems at times intent on adding more puzzles to an already puzzling text. The cutting and rearranging of scenes in Act V does not make the story any plainer. Posthumus's vision comes over as a fragment from *Ruddigore*; Jove (Michael Hordern) has no eagle and looks like a shabby old clergyman; the comic Jailer, whom Shaw called "just the thing to save the last act", is so cut as to waste an excellent little performance by Ray Mort. Patricia Hayes does very well as the Soothsayer in the closing minutes, expounding the prophecy with compelling authority. But boredom often threatens, and there might have been a case for using Shaw's *Cymbeline Refinished*, which gets Shakespeare's 485 lines in the final scene down to 89.

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commentary

Symbols and stones

Peter Kemp

Memories of the Future: John Ruskin
Channel 4

"Ruskin was a synthesizer; he brought things together", declared Robert Hewison. To illustrate this, *Memories of the Future* extensively catalogued his multifarious concerns – architecture and topography, painting and economics, cultural history, social planning, rocks and Rose Queens and road-building schemes. Pursuing the various paths his interest took, it explored Venice, Oxford and the Lake District. Prose extracts, sketches, water-colours, even a gently melancholy tune – tinkled out on a piano as the camera moved along its sepia score – testified to his creative range.

Nor was the diversity displayed all Ruskin's. There was also a marked difference of opinion between two of the programme's contributors. While Robert Hewison maintained that the unconsummated marriage to Effie was "really rather a trivial incident in Ruskin's life", Peter Fuller vehemently insisted that it was of crucial importance. It was Ruskin's failure to connect with Effie, he asserted, that generated in him a compensatory taste for coupling the literal and the metaphorical through symbol. Hewison's reminder that "he was doing the same thing before he met Effie" might seem to have squashed this theory. But Fuller adhered to it and later spread it further, announcing that Ruskin "wanted to make Effie into a kind of unconsummated symbol". But, after the wedding, Ruskin surely seemed keener on evading Effie than idealizing her. Nor does she appear to have provided especially promising material for his romanticism: meeting her when she was Mrs Millais, Henry James, for instance, found her "coarse, vulgar, jolly . . . as unRuskinish a creature as one could conceive". Such considerations would scarcely give pause to Fuller, though – a commentator most in his element when operating on a level of nebulous generalization, expatiating on such matters as "the mushroom cloud of the twentieth century" or delivering himself of large pronouncements much bespattered with the demonstrative article: Ruskin "had this enormous difficulty with his feelings"; he made "these obsessive collections of stones"; "he began to have these strange ideas".

Elsewhere, the programme proved attractively precise and informative, with expertise expertly drawn upon. An aptly named Mrs Prickett made instructive points about Ruskin's encouragement of local needlecraft. His influence on church architecture was skilfully demonstrated by Paul Thompson in *All Saints, Margaret Street*. Paying especially close attention to the church's pulpit, intricately inlaid with a variety of stones, he explained that this was designed as a dismissal of the damage done to Biblical authority by the work of the geologists: as their hammers chipped at the Rock of Ages, William Butterfield, the architect, countered with a blazoning forth of what was seen as the creator's mineral munificence – sermons in stones, as it were.

The programme offered some preaching of its own. As in the preceding week's film on William Morris, there was a rather emphatic holding forth about contemporary relevance. Gamely, the presenter scaled King's College Chapel to elicit from a mason on the roof his belief in the importance of hand-labour. Even more riskily perhaps, in view of Channel 4's current position, Raymond Williams was allowed to use Ruskin as a basis for deploring advertising.

As with the programme on Morris, too, the film was pictorially splendid, covering a rich visual span – from Ruskin's fastidious recordings of Venetian architectural detail to a selection of Turner's misty fervencies, from neo-Gothic interiors to atmospheric vistas of the Lakes. Pictures of Ruskin himself were amply in evidence as well, documenting his progress from dapper, self-engrossed-looking youthfulness to the ravaged old man whose disturbed eyes peered out through a tangle of hair and eyebrows like wild-life from undergrowth. Changes in the shape of Ruskin's thinking weren't always as graphically portrayed. And the programme entirely left out a key stage in his altering attitudes: stressing his early evangelical fervour, it never explained what swung him away from this. Yet Ruskin's stay in Turin in 1858, where study of Veronese's "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" helped to effect his famous "unconversion", was, he later affirmed, "the crisis of the whole turn of my thoughts". As such, it surely merited a mention in a programme obviously aiming to give a comprehensive picture of its subject.

A dream of home

Elizabeth Winter

IVAN GONCHAROV
Oblomov
Dramatized by Matthew Walters
Radio 4

"I wasn't asleep, I was thinking." Aggrieved, Oblomov maintains his desire to be undisturbed by "life", cherishing his splendid idleness. In a state between sleeping and thinking, he whiles away the hours beset by the impossibility of action and making a very good case for his dusty, cluttered flat in St Petersburg as an excellent place to be. The outside world is so noisy, busy and artificial, moving about so troublesome, dressing in anything other than his capacious oriental dressing gown so inconvenient. Government service was a nightmare which he endured for two years, but now his chief occupation is dreaming up plans for his estate, for the moment when he returns to the country and starts living.

James Fox plays Oblomov in the radio dramatization by Matthew Walters of the translation of Goncharov's novel by Ann Dunnigan. He conveys the right degree of aristocratic languor, peevishness and innocent good humour as this Russian "baryn", intelligent and ineffectual, caught between grandiose plans and the inability to put on his own socks.

Within the novel "Oblomov's dream" forms a separate entity. It was published as such in 1849; the rest took Goncharov a further ten years to complete (he also had his problems). The dream evokes his childhood estate, Oblomovka, where in the sleepy contryside the days passed tranquilly in harmony with the seasons and the church calendar. The child was wrapped in warmth and loving affection, regaled with stories of wood demons and bogatyrs, all curiosity and inquisitiveness gradually stifled by loving admonitions. The radio play cleverly uses this dream as a leitmotiv, yet strangely the voices calling out "be careful", "don't do that, it's dangerous" are, for the most part, those of stern men rather than the concerned pampering tones of nannies, aunts and mother. There is perhaps here a certain degree of interference from Anglo-Saxon culture, as when "I'll make you some raspberry tea" comes over as a threat rather than a treat.

The flat northern voice of Alan Bennett as narrator (Goncharov himself was born in Simbirsk, the son of a merchant) provides the links between the scenes dealing with the central relationships. The most persistent of these is with Zakhar, the servant (John Baddely), crafty, cowardly, resentful, devoted, as faithful in his way to the dream of Oblomovka as Oblomov himself, as unthinkingly locked in the master/servant relationship. The involved power-struggles . he engages in (wanting to please, yet wanting to get his own way), the comic impasse and hot-house familiarity, make lively dialogue and good listening. Andrei Stolz (Nicky Henzen), Oblomov's childhood friend (but his father was German and had different ideas about the education of children) arrives to witness a typical scene of wrangling between master and servant. Amused and horrified, he determines to stir Oblomov, shake him up and restore his interest in work. To the urgent strains of the balalaika they start on an energetic programme of activity. Oblomov remains unconvinced, and exhausted. But before Stolz leaves again for a further business trip abroad, he introduces his friend to Olga Sergeyevna (Moir Leslie). Her affectionate teasing and her beautiful singing work a miracle; Oblomov is awakened. Their summer of courtship, the autumn of doubts, the final grief and separation (Oblomov has trouble keeping up the pace) follow the novel closely and convincingly.

What has to be omitted is the sensuous appeal of much of Goncharov's writing; Oblomov's final haven, in the company of Agafya Pshenitzyn (Auriol Smith), suffices particularly in this respect. Her devotion comes across clearly, but where are the smells of cinnamon and vanilla, the coffee, cream and hot white rolls, the steaming crust of well-cooked pies which she produced for his gleaming approval? Difficult to convey on the air, admittedly, but sad that the peace he found under her roof is deprived of these rich delights, making his decline seem the more abject.

The continuing plight of the Theatre Museum

Julie Hankey

The theatrical and theatre academic world has been dismayed by the decision of Lord Gowrie, Minister for the Arts, to shelve the Theatre Museum, even if it is only for the time being. The regrets and assurances coming out of the minister's office sound too familiar: there have been, after all, eleven years of them – ever since 1971 when the government first agreed to the scheme in principle, until last year, when, after much public agitation, it agreed in practice. And the decision is all the more dismaying since last year's battle was fought on first principles, the whole idea having been dismissed as an indefensible luxury by the Rayner report (see *TLS*, July 23, 1982). The decision to go ahead in the face of that recommendation felt like an especially solid reaffirmation. The necessary money, about £1,000,000, was put into the Arts budget for the current year and the lease on the site of the old Flower Market, Covent Garden – a lease which included a contract for £900,000 worth of building work – was to have been signed with the GLC on July 7.

Two hours before that moment the Chancellor announced the government's spending cuts, among which were £4,000,000 to be found by the Arts Minister, and, within that space of time, the Theatre Museum found itself back in limbo. Lord Gowrie stresses those two hours. It was an agonizing decision, he says, but it had to be made speedily. Nearly £1,000,000 was about to be spent irrevocably on something which was as yet notional. Should he allow the thing to go ahead, and thus leave the whole brunt of the £4,000,000 to be borne by projects already in progress? Surely not. The logic of the situation demanded that he halt the Theatre Museum. And since time was of the essence he did so there and then.

It is a curious glimpse of ministerial practice. Is this how such things are done? Surely the GLC could be expected – given the consequences to itself – to allow the minister a week or two, not to insist on the actual day and hour written down in its diary. After all, according to Paul Channon, the Minister for the Arts in the last government, work on the site was due to have started in May of this year. The lease had already been delayed three months. £4,000,000 worth of cuts take some finding: priorities must be balanced, the least devastating options searched out, ways round discovered. The minister might even be expected to fight his corner against the cuts. Anyone outside the Treasury would understand. The GLC itself might have eased the problem, if it had been approached, and have been amenable to some relaxation in the method of payment, so as to avoid the instant commitments of £900,000. But it wasn't approached until after the event. Perhaps, after all, there wasn't much of a problem for the minister, but rather an opportunity: a handy million all in one go. At any rate, it is odd to find an Arts Minister so eager to accommodate the Treasury, and it is worth knowing in this connection that Lord Gowrie is, besides being the Arts Minister, also the Treasury spokesman in the House of Lords.

The other point in Gowrie's *argument* – that *here was a project that* had not, at least, been started – is true in only a very superficial sense. In fact the Theatre Museum exists, is in operation and has been accumulating archives and collections for the last thirty years and more, all on the implicit, and sometimes the explicit understanding that it would eventually house them properly and make them available to the public. This it cannot do in the few rooms made available to it by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Most of its holdings are in store. To delay the proper facilities for exhibition and research is as much an interruption of current effort, as it is to delay, say, a theatre production in mid-rehearsal, or a film before it has reached the cutting room. Collections and libraries without a public and without scholars are pathetically still born.

Lord Gowrie insists that he cares as much as anybody about the fate of the Theatre Museum, that he has inherited a commitment, and that, barring further financial stringencies (not, incidentally, impossible to imagine), the scheme will be a priority in the next fiscal year. This attitude is to be applauded and encouraged. Norman St John Stevas gave it a boost when his all-party delegation to the minister came away with the assurance that the possibility of making some money available before the next fiscal year would be looked at. It is crucial that the thing should not languish. It will always be possible to argue, however speciously, for the work to be put off because it hasn't started. One wall would make all the difference. And after all, what are the sums involved? They are minuscule compared with total government expenditure. £1,000,000 against £120,000,000,000 according to St John Stevas, and it is a million which could well be wiped out anyway, in the course of a year, by inflation and the job of recosting the whole project. Furthermore, the GLC has indicated that it cannot keep the Flower Market empty indefinitely. £2,500,000 have already been spent on the plans and drawings and other professional fees related to that particular site. Any long delay in the interest of economy could mean that that money will have been wasted. It may turn out that the Treasury will be better served by going ahead sooner rather than later.

The quarterly *Theatre Ireland* has recently produced its third issue. A letter of protest from a reader in New Zealand concerning initial broad-mindedness – "while articles on theatre in China or Poland may be interesting in themselves, I think readers may be more concerned with what is happening in Irish theatre" – seems to have prompted some resolution on the part of the editors: there is an evaluation of Michael Bogdanov's modern-dress *Hamlet* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and a retrospective look by Paddy Devlin at the banning for political reasons of Sam Thompson's *Over the Bridge* in the 1950s, plus shorter pieces on alternative and community theatres in Ireland. Thirty names are listed on *Theatre Ireland*'s masthead, between its Editorial Panel and Board, but among them they seem unable to agree on what style to use for titles, proper names, etc, since the use of italics and bold type varies from page to page. Subscriptions cost £6 (sterling) and £8 (IR) and are available from 172 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3ES.

Author, Author

Competition No 132

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which *follow and to send us the answers so* that they reach this office not later than August 12. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 132" *on the envelope, should* be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 19.

1 "Here's something to amuse you meanwhile – *The Times Literary Supplement*. The boy must have delivered it by mistake."

"As a matter of fact I ordered it", said Godfrey. "I hope you don't mind."

"Mind? Of course not, so long as you don't want to read me any of it aloud. It will be quite like old times. I haven't seen the dreary old rag for years."

2 —— was not thinking about the murder.

Instead, he was smoking a cigarette and reading *The Times Literary Supplement* – nowadays vulgarly retitled TLS, without even a full stop after the "S" – one of three special issues given over to modern Albanian poetry.

3 A short study of one of the Cavalier poets (Denham, Suckling, possibly Lovelace) commissioned by an inexperienced publisher for a series of minor poets, was taxed with gross inaccuracy by a reviewer (its sole one) in *The Times Literary Supplement* but in language so immoderate that —— on the whole, was able to laugh off the notice as a piece of academic pedantry.

Competition No 128

Winner: D. Hawes
Answers:

1 Indeed I don't think it matters", she added, "how one looks behind."

"I should say it mattered more", said Gertrude. "Then you don't know who may be observing you. You are not on your guard. You can't try to look pretty."

Charlotte received this declaration with extreme gravity. "I don't think one should ever try to look pretty", she rejoined, earnestly.

Henry James, *The Europeans*, chapter 2.

2 The tea-rose tea-gown, etc
Supplants the mousseline of Cos.
The pianola "replaces"
Sappho's barbitos.

Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", III.

3 One cry, and I stumble from bed,
cow-heavy and floral
In my Victorian nightgown.
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The
window square
Whitens and swallows its dull stars.
And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song".

T·L·S Children's books

Guiding young readers

Julia Briggs

BING TAYLOR AND PETER BRAITHWAITE (Editors)
The Good Book Guide to Children's Books
Penguin. £2.95.
0 14 006756 6

Anxious parents, embarrassed by choice, often ask what books their children should read. With the field so large, a reliable guide to form is needed, advising us which are the sleepers, what we can confidently put our money on. The self-proclaimed experts, however, as often as not, issue awful warnings instead of hot tips: don't let your children read "profane ballads, fond and amorous romances, fabulous histories"; young minds need to be fostered on the meat-and-two-veg of facts. The next generation is as likely as not to reverse such advice: the junk food of fiction turns out, after all, to feed the imagination, just as chocolate and peanuts prove, reassuringly, to contain iron and vitamin D. Yet Bulldog Drummond, Biggles and Enid Blyton may still be thought to rot the literary milk teeth. And what of those acknowledged poisoners of the system, sexual stereotyping, racism, and what the Americans term "ageism" and "handicapism"? What of anything that encourages young people to elude the necessary nourishment of things-as-they-are? Bob Dixon in *Now Read On* warns that "all evils come from human, not disembodied or supernatural sources", adding, more contentiously, that "to tell children otherwise is to tell them a massive and mind-crippling lie".

Young minds are not crippled that easily. The child who reads an externalized story of good and evil – whether *Beowulf* or *The Pilgrim's Progress* – is more likely to move on to George Eliot, Ralph Ellison or whatever, than the one never weaned from the telly and Space Invaders. And if that's a somewhat negative argument, isn't it possible that the difficulties of choosing meaningfully between right and wrong, of making sense of arbitrary adult rules, are so alarming and overwhelming at a particular stage of growing up that the child seeks a necessary relief in a world where all is clearly signposted, where dragons and orcs may be fought with physical strength, rather than invisibly tormenting their victims with queasy and ineffectual pangs of guilt or embarrassment? It may also be that children's developing taste partly re-enacts the development of literature itself, from its incantatory, heroic or folkloric beginings, only gradually arriving at the fully voiced complexities and ironies of later forms. Certainly it is true of reading great novelists at an early age that one finds primarily narrative satisfactions, rather than the deeper insights they later afford.

Penguin, in an attempt to answer those insistent parental questions, have brought out *The Good Book Guide to Children's Books*. This takes a short way with the professional Jeremiahs, affirming a positive and comprehensive view by including Enid Blyton and *Doctor Who* alongside *Alice*, Kenneth Grahame and E. Nesbit, and manfully declaring that "the crowning glory of children's books is fantasy". Do we really need more second-rate imitations of Tolkien, LeGuin, Garner and Susan Cooper? Must dark towers and powers still be encouraged to rise, Arthurian, from Atlantis and Annwn, to engulf unwary readers in runes, rituals, ogham and the rest? Edwardian writers, too, among them Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany and the Benson brothers went in for Celtic powers of evil, but are largely unread today. Despite their plea for fantasy, the editors of the *Good Book Guide* have not gone overboard for the form; indeed, enthusiasts will miss George MacDonald, Walter de la Mare, T. H. White and, most of all, John Masefield. *The guide is short, too, on* historical novels – no Gillian Avery, no Cynthia Harnett, no Kipling, even. Presumably Geoffrey Willan's Nigel Molesworth, Anthony Buckeridge's Jennings and Darbishire and Frank Richards's Billy Bunter are discarded as representing the unacceptable face of private education; they have been replaced by the superior moral hygiene (one must suppose) of *Grange Hill Rules – OK*.

It is, of course, only too easy to indulge in such complaints almost indefinitely. The value of the *Good Book Guide* lies precisely in its necessary selectivity – it lists around 500 books, covering all age groups and a very wide range of interests. By and large it has been capably and pleasantly assembled, with brief and sensible descriptions of the books recommended, together with colour reproductions of their covers. The whole is enlivened by Quentin Blake's irresistibly comic drawings of readers and dogs (though I found his Look-Me-Up Chart quite incomprehensible). At the end, a substantial effort is made to provide a summary, with approximate prices, of the types of book a child's collection should include, and this is backed up by lists of bookshops, explanations of how books can be ordered, and even an order form.

The editors' line, given the various sects and dogmas to be encountered in the field, is prudently latitudinarian, but one inevitable consequence is that at times it achieves a rather flaccid compromise between the popular and commercial, and books of real literary distinction. Revealingly, the figure to emerge as truly representative of this middle way is Roald Dahl, who gets five separate mentions, more than any other author. The tone of the introduction is a little reminiscent of the absurd didacticism to be found in sex manuals, the emphasis firmly placed on the "dolce" rather than the "utile": "Pleasure from books is the aim"; "You will discover quite early on *that children's books can have a charm* and depth that enchants you as well as the children. This is as it should be . . ." The idealism of sex manuals, too. This doesn't at all accord with my memories of reading the collected works of the Reverend W. Awdrey (mercifully not listed here) for the umpteenth time. At this point let us celebrate the wonderful moment when children can finally read all their impossible favourites to themselves, even if these are, on the whole, rightly beneath the notice of the *bien-pensant Good Book Guide*.

Not quite the real thing

Gillian Avery

ROBERT BATOR (Editor)
Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature
Chicago: American Library Association. £27.95.
0 8389 0372 X

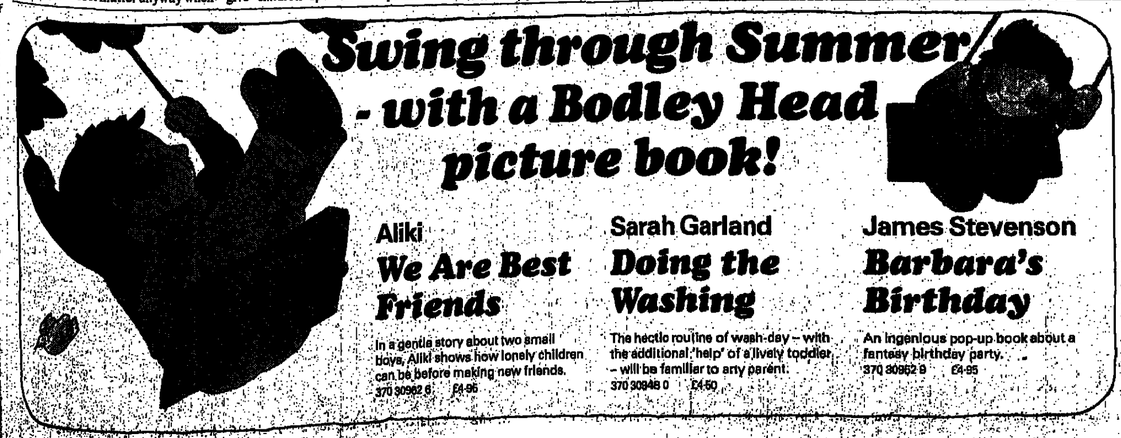
"Children", says Clifton Fadiman in the essay that opens *Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature*, "are proof against literary fads, literary gossip, and especially literary criticism." This of course is the main reason why there is such uncertainty about how to approach it. Criticism is written by adults for adults, and the child reader, it has to be said, generally prefers the books that do not attract this sort of attention. Should critics treat children's books as adult novels *manqués*, or as something altogether inferior for which they have to make allowances? Should they write from the point of view of the preceptor, the moralist, or the parent? Or the child they fancy they once were? Do they look for books to please or to teach? Do they impose adult canons of good taste? And does it matter anyway when the demands made by the child are mostly that its reading should be exciting and/or funny?

Robert Bator, editing these essays and reviews from Chicago, has selected some fifty pieces, English and American. His introduction outlines the difficulty of the task. "Despite the considerable heritage of literature for children and the many books about that literature", he comments, "the criticism of books for children remains in the scaffolding stage", and this in spite of the sound foundations laid by Mrs Trimmer (writing as a preceptress and a moralist) in the *Guardian of Education* as long ago as the beginning of the last century. Before moving on, in the second part of his symposium, to particular territories – picture books, poetry, fiction, fantasy – he tries to establish first what children's literature is, and then what form criticism of the genre should take.

In his introduction to this section he quotes the author who blandly announces "we all have a pretty good idea of what children's literature includes", and points out how difficult it is in fact to define it. Harvey Darton has suggested that such books were "printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them *profitably* quiet." But writers like Russell Hoban, Leon Garfield and Alan Garner deny that they have children in mind at all, and John Rowe Townsend argues that the best operative definition of a book for children is whatever is issued by a publisher's juvenile division. (Certainly Natalie Babbitt's last novel, *Herbert Rowbarge*, the life and more particularly the death of an Ohio fairground proprietor, seems only to be on the juvenile list because her previous stories were.)

But writers of children's books are not to be trusted on this issue. They are *very much aware that in general their* work is regarded as an apprenticeship to "the real thing", that they are deemed to write for children because they are not capable of anything more sophisticated. *In Contemporary Essays in Aesthetics* F. J. Coleman informed us in 1968 that "the lowest pleasure would be what any sentient human being can feel – children, idiots, the senile; they are such pleasures that do not require any power of discrimination . . . For surely we do not speak of children or the mentally deficient as *experiencing* art." Though there would be few academics who would express this may seem contrived and false, and the best books (using "best" in the literary sense) are those that avoid a situation demanding a palliative device such as these. The desire for liberty to be pessimistic is one factor that drives the children's author to adult fiction, together with a desire for release from the necessity of filtering all reactions through the net of a child's experience.

Signposts of course can provide no clear-cut answers to the questions that are debated, but it is perhaps a better starting point for future discussion than we have ever been given before. There is some spirited sparring to enjoy: Mrs Trimmer denouncing *Primrose Pretty Face*; Susan Cooper telling the Children's Literature Association what she thinks of critics, and Lois Kuznets's irritated rejoinder; Ethel Heins and Lillian Gerhardt at it hammer and tongs over the question of the relation of children's literature to contemporary adult fiction. There is also Catherine Storr discussing the nature of fairy stories, Geoffrey Trease on the problems of the historical storyteller, among many other contributions. The sections are linked and given continuity by an exceptionally wise and lucid commentary from the editor. It is a most stimulating collection.



The old technology

Colin Greenland

MICHAEL HYNDMAN

Nine Lost Days

Allen and Unwin. £4.95.
0 04 823221 1

Paradoxical as it may seem, there is such a thing as a book whose ideal readers are intelligent enough to acknowledge that what they are reading is complete nonsense. Most of these books are satires or farces, requiring appreciation of the ridiculous. The next largest category consists of fantasy and science fiction, which domesticate the improbable while exercising the mind well beyond the bounds of the possible. Hyndman's book is a perfect example of this effect in a juvenile mode. Its ideal reader is a teenager with a voracious imagination *and vocabulary prepared* to adopt words like "acronym", "costive" and "coaxial", if it doesn't include them already. The plot races along, taking *unexpected corners at top speed*, not even pausing as it fires concentrated bursts of education in all directions: astronomy, geomorphology, poetry, plasma physics, Celtic and classical mythology, even how to hijack a cruise missile. It has a plot which any competent intellect must recognize as wilfully absurd, wildly implausible, even internally inconsistent. And the ideal reader will relish that too.

The story concerns the arrival of Qenet, an immortal goddess, in twentieth-century Wiltshire, and her *efforts to prevent a villainous elf called* Finky Snid (names are not Hyndman's strong point) from stealing Earth out of its place in the space-time continuum. Qenet is assisted by *Ben and Josie*, two horribly clever siblings with nerves of steel, a friendly elf called Mar Ten and his pet miniature tyrannosaurus. Qenet drives like Steve McQueen, swigs crème de menthe straight from the bottle, and packs an electric punch measurable in terawatts. Snid dresses like a Californian stud and schemes under cover of being Professor of Archaeology at the University of Salisbury. Mar Ten is an electrical and mechanical genuis; in fact all elves are, just as all goddesses and gods are "stabilized energy forms". In prehistory, when humanity was still capable of telepathy and psychokinesis, the three races lived in cultural "symbiosis". The divinities *supplied the power, the elves the* engineering, and the humans the strategic "low cunning" of evolutionary survival, much sharper than that of the immortals. Twentieth-century mortals have forgotten all about this co-operative alliance with the Otherworld, and have even allowed the old henges and long barrows, transfer stations for travellers in space and time, to fall into disrepair. Hyndman accomplishes some brisk sleight-of-hand around this point, equivocating between stone circles and silicon circuitry. His coup is to make his elder races possessors of a technology far higher than our own. He revivifies ancient magic by identifying it with modern mysteries: neutrinos, black holes, force fields. The prehistoric and the eternal come crowding into the already chaotic culture of well-adjusted middle-class adolescence. *Qenet* first announces herself by interrupting a broadcast on Josie's radio-cassette recorder. Josie has just switched equably from Radio 1 to *Radio 3, from the Boomtown* Rats to Debussy; Qenet breaks in, speaking Latin. Josie tapes and translates it.

Nine Lost Days is a nonchalant, breezy book, perhaps a little too hearty for its own good. It alertness to contemporary trivia is vivid and entertaining now. In five years it will be dated, in ten indecipherable. None of the immortals remarks on it, but history happens faster these days. It is that same "low cunning" which Qenet prizes in Josie and Ben that has made the "symbiosis" of gods and humans obsolete, and these anachronisms *quaint. If Hyndman had stopped to* notice that he might have managed to rescue his own novel from that flux, at least for a while.

Liberty and loyalty

J. K. L. Walker

ROBERT LEESON

Candy for King

219pp. Collins. £6.95.
0 00 184136 X

Abandoning the delights of Grange Hill, Robert Leeson has moved back to the fashionable Fifties for his new novel. This was the decade, it will be recalled, when Britain last knew true happiness under the benign rule of philosopher kings. In this platonic society, we learn from current research, *the emotional security afforded* by receiving orders was only matched – if not indeed surpassed – by the satisfaction of actually giving them. School, factory, armed services, not to mention still useful stretches of jungle, swamp and desert, were prime areas of extensive trials of the Christian virtues of forbearance, humility and chastity.

Mr Leeson, in *Candy for King*, gives these matters some thought. His hero, Kitchener Candeford, or Candy, is a hefty red-headed seventeen-year-old, a holy innocent whose search for truth, right conduct and the reconciliation of *the four Founder's Day platitudes* – love, liberty, loyalty, leadership – propounded by the Reverend Oswald Tuck, *headmaster of St Joseph's*, lead him inevitably into disaster. Leeson's St Joseph's is a severely abstracted, near-Beanovian image of posh-ness, perched on the hill above Barnswick where the real world of Woollie's, cinemas and scraps with the local lads is to be found. Candy falls for Molly of Woollie's, and after quixotically intervening in a marital brawl between her aunt and uncle is expelled from school and finds himself part of this real world, lodging with the aunt and uncle, sweeping factory floors, suffering ritual humiliation at the hands of the factory girls and, more gently, sexual initiation.

Still trying to reconcile liberty and loyalty, Candy lands with a thump, jobless, in the street, with the twin labels of Red and blackleg hung round his neck. Together with two friends, smart Lord John from St Joseph's and Swarfy from the factory, he joins the army, following in his father's footsteps. Assigned to the Ordnance Corps, the friends are posted out to the Canal Zone, there to sweat it out in boredom and idleness in a tented camp servicing 10,000 tons of aging ammunition. Candy doggedly keeps his romance going by letter with Molly, now risen through the ranks to be a Fleet Street journalist, and offers to marry her after her current boy-friend has made her pregnant. Spells in detention camp, fights with a local *infantry unit and fraternization* with the villagers further enliven his existence until, in a grand finale, unit and villagers stage a triumphant mutiny against their oppressors.

All this is done with some gusto, and no doubt teenage readers will find it easy to identify with a rebellious big brother figure. Leeson pushes the story beyond such a stereotype in his desire to show that true moral awareness begins, at the moment of choice between two equally plausible principles; in Candy's case, when he fiercely decides that all officers are shits – the vital shift in outlook which, until then, had innocently looked for virtue in master as well as man. The final revelation about the true nature of the heroism that led to the death of Candy's father, a private soldier, underlines this. At this point the scaly wings of agitprop hover dangerously close. Conscript privates in the 1950s were about as conscious of being imperialist agents as was that earlier private of the East Kents.



Fond illusions

Edward Blishen

BARBARA WILLARD

Famous Rowena Lamont

Patrick Hardy Books. £4.95.
0 7444 0002 3

In Rowena Lamont, aged sixteen in 1923, Barbara Willard has created a figure of the most pleasant oddity and charm. An orphan, she has been adopted by the Misses Peverill, who – *out of need rather than desire – have* turned their family home into a small boarding school for girls. As a rule, Rowena will not speak to other girls under the age of fourteen: but makes an exception of Kate Martin, whose parents are in India, and who is not particularly dismayed to have to spend Christmas at school rather than with a mediocre aunt. Kate rapidly discovers that Rowena has illusions of grandeur. Her real father is certainly a count – or rather, a *comte*. It is perhaps his French Character that causes her to roll her r's. "I suppose", she says sinking into her seat in the cheerful local bus, "that one could hardly expect a Rrrolls Rrroyce." When she is wearing a school scarf it looks like fine furs; and she *claims to have 117 books of her own.* The true astonising story of her origins she has set out in the three manuscript volumes of "The Journal of the Famous Rowena Lamont". *She lends these to* Kate, but is not easily satisfied with the other's response to them. "You are totally, utterly insensitive . . . . Would that I had never entrusted my precious work to your feeble hands." The awkwardness lies in her having decided that plump little Miss Amy Peverill is her mother: a conviction that threatens disaster when she resolves that a handsome Christmas visitor is her father.

A comic opera story, and, as such, very pleasant. As with most comic operas, we are well advised not to ask certain questions: in this case, how the sensible and kindly Misses Peverill could have allowed Rowena to get into this condition of galloping fantasy. But much of it is truly funny – the comedy being that of young astonishment. The various set-pieces are made to ex*plode in a satisfactorily amusing* fashion and there is a pleasant light-hearted use of words.

But the effect of the story on a young reader is likely to go deeper than comic opera is inclined to go: and this may be because of a curious poignancy and effect of truth in the relationship of the two girls. So Kate finds that she can mock Rowena without being unkind, and without earning the resentment of her friend, whose grandeur amounts to every kind of insecurity, gowned and crowned. Having discovered the unfamiliar thrill of mockery, Kate longs to be able to continue with it. She grows wittier with every minute spent in the other's company, while Rowena *grows more thoughtful* with every moment spent in hers. In the special circumstances of a Christmas that, in one way or another, represents exile for *both, they are seen to lay hold of each* other's character and distinctly change it. And that being the actual nature of friendships, expecially among the young, this is where the pleasure of the story lies: likely to be left behind when its details are forgotten.

A book of secrets

Margaret Meek

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

The Golem

Deutsch. £4.95.
0 233 97534 9

In more senses than one *The Golem* is a book of secrets. Dedicated to "the persecuted and oppressed everywhere, old and young, Jew and gentile, in the hope against hope that the time of false accusations and malicious decrees will cease one day", it is an allegorical fable *in the tradition of The Pilgrim's Progress*. Both books stem from an ancient tradition of narrative; both console and disturb their readers and both provoke interpretation and commentary. Neither is intended only for children. The young, insiders or outsiders, will make it into their own kind of tale without respect for boundaries, whatever else they take to be its message.

The first part of the narrative takes the form of a traditional folk tale. The hero, Rabbi Leib, famous for his learning and cabbalistic knowledge, *creates a helper, a golem or huge clay* giant in order to save a brother Jew from the villain, a spendthrift drunken nobleman whose daughter is thought *to have been killed and her blood used* to make Passover matzoths. The golem is to find the nobleman's daughter and thus free the Jews from suspicion of ritual murder and persecution. This he does, after the manner of this kind of tale which "old women tell while spinning flax by candlelight".

In fable-legend, there are actors rather than characters whose function is related to the plot. The narrator is director, commentator, exegesist of the theme which carries with it subsidiary narrations. The style moves from dramatic dialogue to a spare open telling in a direct style *which is* reminiscent of oral tradition, while clearly drawing on all the coherences of written text, a feat all the more *remarkable for seeming effortless*. For insiders this is a Passover tale of salvation that carries its own *midrash* of ideological and testimonial attitudes. For outsiders it has the enchantments of "God, the family, angels, devils, witches, goblins, logical clarity, punctuation and other such obsolete stuff" which Singer says are his "reason no. 7" for writing for the young.

The second *half of the book* is a commentary on the first. Here human weakness breaks in and the story teller breathes a different kind of narrative life into the golem. *Because he has* failed to obey instructions and keep the golem a secret from outsiders, the Rabbi's power over the giant fails and the golem's life is prolonged beyond the hour of need, with dire consequences for the Jews of Prague.

The stirring of self-awareness in the great giant, his love for the servant girl Miriam who is forced to trick him into letting her erase the sacred name from his forehead, *thus bringing* him to death, is a story in another tradition, the narrative of our human frailty redeemed by human love. Here the outsiders are more at home. They understand the golem's problems: who is he, if he has no father, mother, brother or sister? To have saved a whole community and to have a father in heaven is no consolation for not being as other men, brothers even in misfortune. What will the young readers of both traditions think of the restoration of Hannah the Rabbi's wife who betrays him, rather than Miriam *the obedient servant?*

Singer's skill lies in presenting a story in such a way that it has the persuasive directness of all parables, a kind of moral *authority that seems to* make the complicated nature of tolerance a matter of simple choice. The Emperor has no power over men's minds, so his earnest devotion to Catholicism is as nothing to his persecution of Jews and Protestants. The Rabbi, so good and true, has a wife, as had Potiphar, and Macbeth, who nags and who pays a servant to do her dirty work. The golem is wise only as long as his creator keeps to the contract about his creative power. As *the complicated* issues raised by this fine book: When they do they may well remember the dignified black and grey of the fine-grained illustrations by Uri Shulevitz and the sound of the words that end the story: "A great power was hidden in these people whom God had chosen for His own and whom He was bound to bring back to their glory at the End of Days." For all his concern to bring us all in, Singer's story stays with the insiders, but is the more powerful for that.

The olden days

Katherine Duncan-Jones

PENELOPE LIVELY

Fanny and the Monsters

Heinemann. £5.50.
0 434 94888 8

These three short stories about Fanny Stanton, first published in 1976, 1977 and 1980, are now gathered into one volume. They are set in the Bad Old Days of the 1860s, when fathers were heavy, Sunday was given over to church-going and improving reading, and Science was not part of the curriculum in the family school-room. Fanny, the eldest of eight children in an upper middle-class Oxfordshire family, is surprisingly detached in her outlook on these things, rejecting religion, longing to be a palaeontologist, and discovering that the way to achieve contentment in a large family is by democratic process: *"Decisions about what they all did . . .* were to be taken by everyone". Could she perhaps, like the children in some of Penelope Lively's other books, have wandered back from a *Guardian*-reading family of the mid-twentieth century? The 1860s are depicted condescendingly as a period of bigotry and barbarism – though Fanny's father, in the title story, shows brief glimmerings of approval for her when her observant eye for fossils wins the admiration of a young scientist from the British Museum.

By far the best story is the first, which deals with Fanny's theological and emotional upsets after a supplicatory prayer for cherry pie at Sunday lunch has been answered. Appended to the prayer for cherry pie was a wish that the latest Stanton baby might be removed (not killed) by divine intervention; after the first part of the prayer has been answered Fanny hovers by the crib in an agony of anticipation, waiting for the baby's *imminent assumption into heaven.* After a rather unconvincing episode in *which she runs away* from home and spends half an hour pretending to be a kitchen-maid at the vicarage, she comes back, fast friends with the myopic but understanding vicar, and subsequently develops a particular affection for the baby. The narrative is fast moving, events are well described, and social observations, such as Fanny's momentary reflection that the real kitchen-maid employed by the Stanton family is little older than herself, are lightly delivered.

The second story shows Fanny pursuing her interest in fossils and *prehistoric monsters in the face of* strong discouragement from her Aunt Caroline, her father, and her stereotypical governess, Miss Purser. The third describes the battle of the Stantons over a piece of waste ground with an almost equally numerous family newly arrived next door. It is here that the softness of Mrs Lively's imagination is most damaging: the idea that fourteen children from two separate families can sort out their territorial differences and achieve joint decisions without rancour would be hard to credit even if the story had been set amid group-sharing schoolchildren in the 1980s. Mrs Ewing's story "Our Field", 1889, on a similar theme, did full justice to the insistent individuality of children: here the ideals of the Adventure Playground seem too hopefully projected into a supposedly repressive environment.

John Lawrence's fine illustrations are animated and pleasant in a sub-Ardizzone manner. It is a pity that the stories were not revised and edited a little before being brought together. It is at the end of the second story, rather than the last one, that we learn what happened to Fanny when she grew up; we are told three times over about the composition of the family and the fact that only the older children enjoy the privilege of a nice big Sunday lunch with their parents. Nine-year-old readers may not object to the *ideological anachronisms, but they will find these repetitions tedious.*

Infinitely pleasing

Galen Strawson

ALLAN AHLBERG

Ten in a Bed

Illustrated by André Amstutz.
Granada. £3.95.
0 246 11551 3

Once upon a time there was a review of a book in the *TLS* Children's Books Pages that started off "Once upon a time there was a review of a book in the *TLS* Children's Books Pages that started off . . .". And then it went on "And then it went on 'And then it went on "And then it went on 'And then it went on'"". What happened in the end nobody knows. It is not even certain that there was an end, although the *TLS* Children's Books Pages are generally agreed to be of finite extension. But the moral of it was plain. Don't let the fact that you are telling a story become part of the story you are telling. And don't let the story become part of itself. Those who contravene this rule risk being rudely expelled into a dark and stormy night of their *own devising.* (*That*, after all, is what the Captain eventually did to Antonio – or was it Antonia – though one never gets to hear of it, or indeed of *anything else, in Antonio's version* of what happened on that dark and stormy night.)

Dinah Price's problem, in *Ten in a Bed*, is similar, but different. Every time she goes up to bed, she finds it's occupied. First by three bears, then by a wicked witch, a booted dramatical cat, a self-appointed Sleeping Beauty, a casuistical wolf, a simple Simon, a diminutive royal frog and a fefifofumulous (and paedophagous) giant. None of them are sure what story they're in, and several of them are distinctly dangerous. But Dinah is a resourceful girl who cries only once and shows great presence of mind. She soon learns how to deal with her evening visitors. She tells each of them a story, and as often as not the story loops round into reality (Dinah's *reality*, that is), changing it as it goes, and usually sufficing to coax or compel her guests back out of the window whence they came; whereupon they bumble, hop, stump, broomstick (vb), lope, prowl or flounce off into deepening shades of the summer's night.

This is a delightful book. There's only one serious threat of infinite regress, when Dinah is telling the bears *in her* bed about a little girl who tells some bears a story, and the baby bear asks "What was the story *she* told?" and the mummy bear says she thinks she can guess, and starts telling the story she thinks the little girl in Dinah's story was telling. . . . And only Wilfred (Wilfred the wolf) gets at all belligerent about textual variants, reminding a dismayed Dinah that in the oldest version of Little Red Riding Hood "the wolf just gets to eat Red Riding Hood up and that's the end of it". But he in turn is dismayed by Dinah's addition to the oral tradition of a version in which the wolf gets run over by her Uncle Jim's motor bike; and, being too much of a scholar not to take it seriously, he leaps up on to the window ledge (Uncle Jim is in the *offing*), "out into the tree, down on to the dewy grass – and away".

The Library Association has recently announced the winners of their children's books awards for 1982. The Carnegie Medal, which is given for "an outstanding book for children", has been awarded to Margaret Mahy for *The Haunting* (Dent). Gillian Cross's *The Dark Behind the Curtain* (Oxford University Press) was highly commended and Tim Kennemore's *Wolf's Words* (Faber) was commended. The Kate Greenaway Medal for illustrators has ben awarded to Michael Foreman for *Long Neck and Thunder Foot* by Helen Piers (Kestrel) and *The Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales* by Angela Carter (Gollancz).

Absorbing details: picture books 1

Elaine Moss

All the picture books here are bright, lively and entertaining stories, containing elements which the very young reader will relate to quite easily; *but they are also challenging* to a much older readership. They demand intelligence, imagination, investigation and discussion.

Boris Bad Enough is an excellent example of a picture book with an attractive hero (a bad, bad, bad son) and hilarious, bright pictures that will appeal to all ages. Yet Robert Kraus dares to put psychotherapy on the line and offer a simple solution to ordinary family difficulties – which sometimes, through lack of adult self-appraisal, end up on the slab in a Child Guidance Clinic. On the cover of *Boris Bad Enough* a monkey shrink (*you can see* his certificate of Psychiatry framed on the wall) is musing over Boris's behavioural problems. Boris is a little *yellow elephant seen aiming a hefty* kick at the shrink's skinny shins. Self-expression? Perhaps. Yet the big blue elephant Papa and smaller green elephant Mama are deeply embarrassed and full of self-pity. *Why* does Boris break the television, scare the frogs, yell at his parents so loudly that even the goldfish is open-mouthed in dismay? The shrink unblocks his assaulted ears and pronounces judgment: "You", he says to the blue elephant, "are a bad father." "And you", (to the green) "are a bad, bad mother. And you, Boris, are a bad, bad, bad son." Boris agrees cheerfully. But it takes longer for Dad to learn not to rage at Boris but to play with him; and for Mum to switch off her favourite programme in order to read to her son. Boris responds to these changes – but not too fast. It is a black comedy of considerable charm.

Anthony Browne's *Gorilla* is deeper, bleaker, more intense yet finally festive, joyous and moving. It is *a tour de force* by an artist who has consistently breached barriers in the picture-book field with books that explore childhood openness, adult snobbery (*A Walk in the Park*), materialism versus the gift of imagination (*Look What I've Got*), the breakdown of family life (*Hansel and Gretel* in modern dress). In *Gorilla* there is no sign of Hannah's mother – indeed the photo frame on her father's *desk is empty. Father works late at* night, reads *The Times* at breakfast and is always too busy or too tired to answer Hannah's questions – or take *her to the zoo. Hannah is besotted with* gorillas: toys, books, lampshades, King Kong posters, her own drawings reflect her passion. And it is a gorilla, *during the night before her birthday*, who appears life-size at the foot of her bed and, once dressed in father's hat and coat ("A perfect fit", he whispers) whisks her off, swinging through the trees, to visit his relations in cages, at the cinema (Super-gorilla), on placards (Che Guevara gorilla) and at a lyrical midnight ball on the moonlit grass. On the morning of Hannah's birthday she, her father and her new toy gorilla go off to the zoo – in happy companionship.

As always with Browne the alert and imaginative reader is fed with absorbing details that the casual reader will miss. There are framed prints of "the Mona Gorilla" and "Whistler's Mother-Gorilla", for example, a Mervyn Peake-inspired, barren room *in which the only light comes from a* fourteen-inch television tube, and there is a cunning arrangement of father's outdoor clothes hanging limply *over his boots in the hall that suggests* his "absence" even more powerfully than pictures of him working, with Hannah behind his car.

Pat Hutchins's parents and children are altogether warmer, but even in a family where Mother and Father are loving, caring, humorous and understanding, children can feel disregarded. In *You'll Soon Grow Into Them, Titch* Titch is the youngest of three and the dumping ground for old clothes, gleefully passed down to him by fast-growing Pete and Mary. The clothes are too big for him but who cares? And why is Mother knitting socks and pants and a sweater too tiny even for Titch? The sharp-eyed reader will be picking up the clues as the pages turn: bulbs growing, then flowering; birds nesting, laying eggs then feeding their young; Mother's disappearing waistline. All is revealed when she comes home with a new baby. Titch, kitted out in new clothes by Dad meanwhile, is at last able smugly to pass on his worn-out gear.

Mike Dickinson obviously suffers his children gladly and is excellent at capitalizing on their foibles and turning those sometimes irritating stages into imaginative picture books that older siblings will enjoy. In *My Brother's Silly* a detached older brother views the *antics of both his younger brother and* his father with ironic detachment. The father responds to the small boy's wild imaginings ("I'd like to be a postcard"; *"I'd like to be a slug"*) with answers in the same nonsense vein. It is all very light-hearted and entertaining, though the *cri de coeur* at the end will strike home only with other exhausted parents: "My brother thinks being a dad is hard work so he says he's going to stay a little boy for ever. My dad says . . . perhaps he's not so silly after all."

In *We Are Best Friends*, Aliki, with extreme skill, embarks on an *exploration of that most vital yet* elusive experience, friendship; best friendship, in fact. What happens when a best friend moves away? Does loyalty demand loneliness? How will both little boys find new friends? How will they keep in touch? In words and pictures Aliki conveys the depth of feeling, the resilience, the humour of life at school and at home for the under sevens. This is an enchanting and important book (for older readers, too, who will recognize the emotions) because its theme has been thoroughly thought out and presented in a way that will stimulate children's conversation.

In *Paper Capers* Geraldine Martin shows a boy making a string of paper cut-out figures, abandoning it when it is *time to go to the seaside digging a sand*castle – then looking up to find the cut-out figures blowing towards him in the sky. What is fascinating about this *textless picture book is the perspective* in which the earth is shown – from the viewpoint, mostly, of the paper chain carried aloft by bird and breeze.

ROBERT KRAUS: *Boris Bad Enough*. Illustrated by José Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Patrick Hardy. £5.50.
0 7444 0014 7.

ANTHONY BROWNE: *Gorilla*. Julia MacRae. £4.95.
0 86203 104 4.

PAT HUTCHINS: *You'll Soon Grow Into Them, Titch*. Bodley Head. £4.95.
0 370 30960 X.

MIKE DICKINSON: *My Brother's Silly*. Deutsch. £3.95.
0 233 97531 4.

ALIKI: *We Are Best Friends*. Bodley Head. £4.95.
0 370 30962 6.

GERALDINE MARTIN: *Paper Capers*. Kestrel. £4.95.
0 7226 57951 1.



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Age 9-13 £1.25

Traditional forms: picture books 2

Tanya Harrod

If recent publications are anything to go by, not all the classic fairy tales work well in picture-book form. Some of the most famous, for example *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Tom Thumb*, deal with terrible themes which in their pure forms are full of vivid imagery which an older child would turn into pictures in his or her own mind. The description "retold and illustrated by" invariably means that the text has been diminished to make room for pictures and simplified to suit a younger audience.

Lidia Postma's *Tom Thumb* exemplifies the problem. The horrifying story has been rewritten in simple language around delicate scary drawings. Perhaps we should be grateful to be spared passages like this one from the first English translation of Perrault's tale:

> The ogre had seven daughters, all *little children*, and these little Ogresses had all of them very fine complexions, because they used to eat fresh meat like their father; but they had little grey eyes and entirely round, hooked noses, very large mouths, and very long sharp teeth, standing at a pretty distance from each other. They were not yet very wicked, but they promised it very much, for they had already bitten several little children, that they might suck their blood.

But in this version the detail has been dulled and the tiny heroic central character made less interesting. This seems to be a mistake, for a plain tale of evil is less palatable than a fanciful one.

The text of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling* also loses some memorable passages. For example, it seems sad to omit those storks "who walked on their long red legs talking Egyptian" from the lovely opening paragraph of the story. *The Ugly Duckling* is copiously illustrated by Monika Laimgruber in her idiosyncratic, and somewhat unpleasing, stippled style and as a result the text looks cramped and crowded. She has also illustrated Gina Ruck-Pauquet's *The Singing Elephant* but here her rich colours and speckly treatment come into their own and transform a somewhat feeble tale. *The Sugar Prince* is another reworking. Fiona Moody employs the broadest of modern tones and the stylized illustrations make clever use of her fairly limited skills. None the less there is undoubted vigour in the Princess's awful pert remarks and in the busy obsessive-looking drawings.

The Grimm Brothers' *The Frog Prince* is a story that can be appreciated on many levels and combined with Jutta Ash's illustrations should please a wide age range. Each page of text is framed by a little sketched vignette. The colour plates are particularly lovely: palely beautiful visions of the *sparkle of jewellery and lace*, the gleam of fountains and the oozing dewiness of the ubiquitous frog. Jutta Ash has gone some way to achieving that picture book ideal, the perfect marriage of text and illustrations. The same can be said of Lorinda Byran Cauley's treatment of the simple folk tale *The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen*. She crams each page with framed pictures illustrating every incident in this simple story of a fox outwitted by a resolute and hard-working little fowl.

Fairy stories do not lack moral lessons which are complicated and obscure. Hans Christian Andersen's stories tend, however, to be both rational and Christian. In *Red Shoes* we find him at his most severe. The punishment for a young girl's vanity and lightheartedness is terribly vengeful but none the less it is a strange and wonderful tale. Chihiro Iwasaki has illustrated *The Red Shoes* with watercolours of the most rain-washed delicacy. It will obviously be read by an older child but even so the drawings might seem a good deal too artful and attenuated.

Three recent picture books are outstanding and perhaps it is significant that none is a well-known fairy tale. The loveliest is Susan Cooper's adaptation of the Welsh tale *The Silver Cow*. The story is a good one, a variant on the *Goose that lays the Golden Egg: an* enchanted cow emerges from a lake and because of her and her progeny's abundant milk makes a poor farmer into a wealthy man. But his cruelty and greed ensure that his riches are taken from him. Warwick Hutton's watercolours are striking. They capture to perfection the subtle shifts of light in the Welsh hills but contain enough sharp drawing to retain a child's interest. *Two Donkeys and a Bridge* by Ralph Steadman could hardly be more different. It is described on the back cover as "a timely and wry fable" which makes it sound as if it belongs to that dreadful genre the adult fairy tale. The theme is certainly a timely one. Steadman explains at donkey and small boy level how wars begin but he does so in a robust and exciting way without any hint of wryness. The illustrations are of *course splendid: Steadman at his most* spirited and childlike.

Joanna Troughton's *The Wizard Punchkin* is a beautifully designed book. India is a rich source for fairy stories that have a Homeric simplicity about them, as opposed to the wicked stepmother and dark wood preoccupations of German folk tales. This account of a brave prince who rescues his seven brothers and a lovely princess from the evil Punchkin is no exception. The illustrations and end papers, which draw on Indian Mogul art, are perfectly integrated with a thrilling story.

LIDIA POSTMA: *Tom Thumb*. Hutchinson. £4.50. 0 09 150510 0.
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: *The Ugly Duckling*. Illustrated by Monika Laimgruber. Hamish Hamilton. £4.75. 0 241 10836 5.
GINA RUCK-PAUQUET: *The Singing Elephant*. Illustrated by Monika Laimgruber. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.95. 0 340 28610 5.
FIONA MOODY: *The Sugar Prince*. Hutchinson. £4.95. 0 09 130520 8.
THE BROTHERS GRIMM: *The Frog Prince*. Illustrated by Jutta Ash. Andersen Press. £3.99. 0 86264 020 2.
LORINDA BYRAN CAULEY: *The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen*. Pepper Press. £3.95. 0 237 45667 2.
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: *The Red Shoes*. Illustrated by Chihiro Iwasaki. Neugebauer Press: A. & C. Black. £4.50. 0 907234 267.
SUSAN COOPER: *The Silver Cow*. Illustrated by Warwick Hutton. Chatto and Windus: The Hogarth Press. £4.95. 0 7011 2672 8.
RALPH STEADMAN: *Two Donkeys and A Bridge*. Andersen Press. £4.50. 0 86264 045 8.
JOANNA TROUGHTON: *The Wizard Punchkin*. Blackie. £4.95. 0 216 91266 0.

The parents' choice

Blake Morrison

Who are the real consumers of children's books – children or adults? The countless conferences, monographs and articles on the subject suggest that the answer, as we'd expect, must be children. "Good" children's books are those that in some way further a child's development (teaching words and concepts, broadening the imagination or simply entertaining); "bad" children's books are those that don't; adults do not enter into it all. The reality, though, seems a long way from this pious convention. *Until children are of an age to buy or* borrow books for themselves, parents have to determine their reading for them; and until children have learnt to read fluently, parents will be at their elbow, nudging them onwards and trying to bring the text to life. This can be an onerous and repetitive process, made tolerable to parents, who'd probably rather be spending their reading time on the new Iris Murdoch or Timothy Mo, only if there is something in a children's book that they can themselves enjoy. Here, perhaps, is a more honest definition of what we mean by a "good" children's book – a text which adults, too, can put *up with*.

Parental involvement in their children's reading is at its greatest, of course, in the pre-school years. And the fact that parents spend at least as many hours toiling through pre-school books as do their offspring is surely one reason for the popularity of Helen Oxenbury. Her brightly coloured board books – with their exhausted, *frumpish mums*, surprisingly youthful dads and mischievous toddlers – are as standard a part of the middle-class home as Penelope Leach and Fisher Price toys: much of her attraction is that, like Posy Simmonds, she depicts children in a refreshingly unsentimental light. Now that she has acquired language and paper pages, however, much of her old power has been lost: if the board books were like silent movies, full of narrative subtleties, her three new books are *Carry On* comedies, slapstick rather than satirical, patronizing rather than irreverent.

In *Eating Out* mum's too tired to cook so dad offers to take her out to supper – with their toddler in tow. The restaurant is "stuffy" – so we conclude – are the waiter and the mother and her two neatly turned out children on the adjoining table. There are some redeeming Zolaesque touches concerning the lavatories situated round the back of the kitchens before we proceed to the inevitable and disappointing denouement: a crawling toddler, a tripped-up waiter, a tipped-over plate of spaghetti and retirement of the family trio in disgrace ("Never again," said mum"). Similar humiliation follows in *The Birthday Party* where the three-year-old heroine proves reluctant to hand over her present to John, and in *The Dancing Class* where outsize tights and loosely tied ballet shoes cause a group tumble. Reading her new series, one realizes that Oxenbury's appeal has probably always been more to parents than to children: her weepy protagonists tend to be rude, dishevelled and disruptive – good for parental laughs but not for toddler self-esteem. What is new, or more marked, is the exclusively middle-middle-class milieu.

Binette Schroeder's series of *Zebby* board books was among the most sinister of recent years: dark and lurid colours, surrealist landscapes, marauding lions and deep gorges. Her new *Tuffa* series has become more domestic, its central character a small black dog. But many of the same props are there (that mauve sun, those black high-heeled shoes, those friendly little blue and pink birds) and the atmosphere remains Grimm and Gothic. Compared to the colourful products of Schroeder's imagination, most board books look drably utilitarian. But her appeal to small children remains questionable – they *lack liveliness of detail and*, the narratives can seem empty or inconclusive.

The strength of the Find It board books is Stephen Cartwright's drawing. The six creatures which it is the child's task to discover (a puppy, duck, piglet, bird, kitten and teddy) are appealing without being twee, and the objects behind which they peri-conceal themselves, whether simple (a wheelbarrow) or complex (a fridge containing eggs, tomato, trifle, milk, lettuce, cu*cumber and so on*), are lucidly illustrated. It's hard to imagine anyone wanting all six books in the series, since there's a limit to the question-and-answer process involved ("Can you see the kitten?", "What's that it's hiding behind?", "Where do you keep your own one of those?"). But more than one of them should be sampled, for they vary in difficulty.

Emanuel Schongut's series uses the motif of a kitten to introduce a number of simple words – about eight to ten per book. Or, rather, that's the avowed intention: in fact, it seems a book for cat-buffs not toddlers, its imagination more engaged in the delineation of feline charm (all those green eyes, arched backs, little jumps and leaps) than by thought for language development. *Wake Kitten*, for example, teaches a child the words *waking, washing, eating, chasing, pouncing, hiding* and *sleeping*: it's not hard to spot the cat-buff's word smuggled in among words that make up a part of the *child's daily life. Similarly, in Hush Kitten*, a study in onomatopoeia, there's something peculiarly random in the choice of basic noise-words: *crackle, pop, crack, rip* and *miaow* are perhaps unexceptionable, but why *splish-splash* as against the simpler *splash* and why the esoteric *plink-plonk* (a cat walking along a piano)? Perhaps this series is a translation from another language, which explains the linguistic oddities. We don't know, for one of the conventions of books for small children is that their authors, unlike the rest of the writing profession, are denied biographical jacket notes. Whatever the case here, Schongut's books don't seem especially well illustrated or thought out.

The Zebra "Time to Talk" books, on the other hand, have been very carefully thought out indeed, as you'd expect given that, as the publishers acknowledge, they "have been produced with the help of the Pre-school Playgroups Association and with advice from parents, teachers and children". The drawings are not especially original: David Bennet's *chief influence seems to have come* from comics, but his children could do with more of the individuality of comic book characters. The illustrations are nonetheless lucid and detailed, and have the rare ability to offer something that could reasonably interest a five-year old and a *two-year old at the same* time. This seems to be one of the principles of the prose, too: some pages have large simple pictures and only a few words; others have a series of smaller pictures; some have quite demanding questions and answers and complex sentences. The strength of the books is that they could be read three times in one day yet lead to different discussion each time. Authors and publishers of board books could learn a good deal from them – why can't board books have this kind of detail, which small children *do* enjoy?

HELEN OXENBURY:
Eating Out. 0 7445 0037 0
The Birthday Party. 0 7445 0335 4
The Dancing Class. 0 7445 0036 2
Walker Books: First Picture Books. £2.95 each.

BINETTE SCHROEDER:
Tuffa and the Bone. 0 7445 0061 3
Tuffa and Her Friends. 0 7445 0065 6
Tuffa and the Picnic. 0 7445 0062 1
Tuffa and the Snow. 0 7445 0064 8
Tuffa and the Ducks. 0 7445 0063 X
Walker Books. £1.50 each.

STEPHEN CARTWRIGHT and CLAUDIA ZEFF:
Find the Duck. 0 86020 714 5
Find the Piglet. 0 86020 716 1
Find the Bird. 0 86020 719 6
Find the Puppy. 0 86020 717 X
Find the Teddy. 0 86020 715 3
Find the Kitten. 0 86020 718 8
Usborne £1 each.

EMANUEL SCHONGUT:
Hush Kitten. 0 7445 0033 8
Wake Kitten. 0 7445 0032 X
Play Kitten. 0 7445 0034 6
Catch Kitten. 0 7445 0030 3
Look Kitten. 0 7445 0031 1
Walker Books. £1.25 each.

SUE TARSKY:
Shopping. 0 7445 0012 5
DAVID LLOYD
Bathtime. 0 7445 0010 9
WENDY BOASE
Mealtime. 0 7445 0011 7
SUE TARSKY
Playtime. 0 7445 0013 3
Illustrated by David Bennett.
Walker Books: Time to Talk. 75p each.

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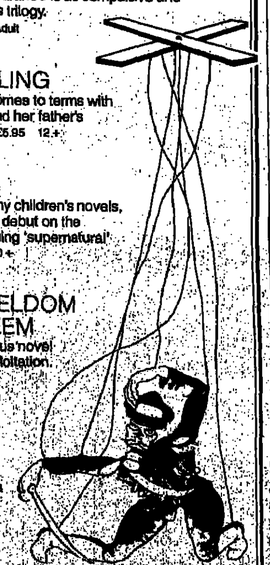
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0 575 03272 3 £5.95 12+



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Attractiveness is not enough: picture books 3

Sarah Wintle

Good books for small children need to achieve just the right combination of the familiar with the unfamiliar. The most positive response is usually compounded of recognition and surprise, and this is just as true of pictures as it is of text. Sheer attractiveness is not enough; children, up to a startlingly late age, are unmoved by views and vistas; they would much rather examine the old cigarette stubs, elastic bands discarded by the postman or dead leaves that lie right under their feet.

Granted the cigarette-stub effect, the first of these books and the one most obviously aimed at a very young audience, the Japanese *I Can Build a House*, is a little too panoramic. The pictures of the teddy-bear protagonist are charming, and the bear's first attempts to build, first out of pastel coloured bricks and then out of cushions in sophisticated shades of brown and cream have pleasingly disastrous outcomes. But the pictures are a little short of the kind of painful detail which children savour. The final attempt at construction demands scissors, sellotape, a large box and parental co-operation.

If You Take a Paintbrush covers a wider range, although the text remains minimal. There is no narrative, just a series of pictures with captions on the theme of colour. Yet the pictures do mostly involve the same people and the characteristic visual style prompts the making of connections between pictures – the building up of a composite notion of the interior of a house for example. *Each illustration* has a rather charming enigmatic air and is full of circumstantial detail. The interiors are intriguing; full of books, plates of biscuits, odd pottery pitchers and jars arranged in crowded shelves, and children are intensely busy at not quite definable tasks. These pictures can be endlessly read with pleasure.

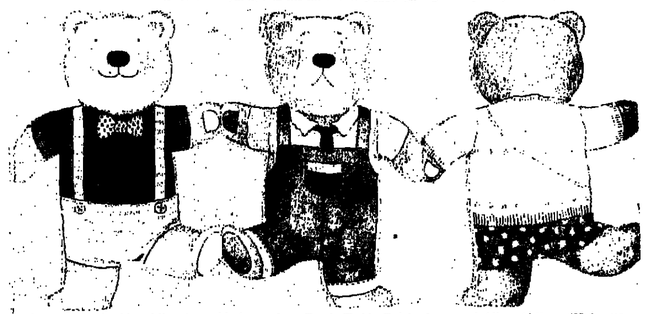
The remaining books make more of words. The rather dispiriting *Brown Bear in a Brown Chair* has a story and rather brown illustrations. Brown bears who sit in brown chairs get squashed and so this one demands clothes, gets a garment a page, thinks he looks silly and returns to his original state. The chair is re-covered, but, alas, the bear's dress is made out of the same material, and we are back with a potentially squashed bear. His owner promises to love and protect him in an unconvincing last page turn-about. Such a low-key story needs to be more amusingly illustrated and more exactly paced and varied if it is to sparkle.

The two books of American origin aim fairly obviously at articulating for the child possibly unacceptable or inadmissable feelings about the world and its inhabitants. *Alligators are Awful* suffers from the very poor quality of the reproduction of its pictures, but has an attractively bold typeface. The alligator, rude, obstreperous and generally destructive, *substitutes for hurtful parents* – he doesn't listen to what you say; for resented siblings and contemporaries – he busts up your trike; and for the adult world generally – he barges ahead in bus queues. Again the text rather lacks rhythm, and the illustrations show an odd sort of billy-billy place that doesn't quite support its own fantasy.

Poor Esmé portrays a more specific picture of a child's predicament and is more fun. Its somewhat Sendak-like illustrations are gravely funny about the frustrations of being a child in a sophisticated adult world, with no one to play with. Esmé's child neighbours are uniformly awful and her Mum and Dad were always going to parties", that is when they are not canoodling in a hammock, leaving their disconsolate daughter right out of it. Esmé makes a series of wishes for a friend, each illustrated by a wish-fulfilment bubble picture of life with an animal companion, and is finally rewarded by the birth of a sibling (The canoodling has paid off). The last picture shows Esmé, looking distinctly fed-up, two nappy pins stuck into her Laura Ashley smock, and holding a manically grinning baby. Beastly old life is at its tricks again, and children should enjoy the joke.

Wolves are such tremendously popular villains with smallish children that it would be hard for any telling of *The Three Little Pigs* to fail. Tony Ross offers the tough version – two of the little pigs are eaten because they are not "smart" enough. The narrative plays games with pastoral-urban themes; the pigs set out from a high-rise block and after the wolf has ended up in the soup, the country quickly becomes overcrowded with more urban seekers of rural solitude. Such jokes are likely to pass over the heads of most four-year-old wolf fans, but the hyperactive illustrations have some nice touches, as when the wolf's huffing and puffing blows away the entire contents of the house of sticks including the television. The combination of traditional folktale and *Beano*-like narration and illustration is pretty brash, but this book aims at a wider readership than *Poor Esmé*.

Comic style illustrations and a generally down-market feel characterize *Lucky: the story of a Puppy*, and neither works to its advantage. The pictures are glaringly ugly and the story panders to the least constructive and most narcissistic side of a child's imagination. Kate gets a puppy, but her father (she doesn't appear to have a mother) will not feed it and viciously turns it out into the snow for eating his *slipper and piddling on the carpet*. The puppy spends a miserable night, is knocked down by a car, rescued and finally adopted by David whose parents are perfect. The combination of violence and sentimental morality is quite nasty.



Three unmistakeably Ahlbergian teddy bears, from Ready Teddy Go! *by Janet and Allan Ahlberg (Heinemann, 99p. 0 434 92506 3), one of a new series of cut-out friezes called "Daisychains". Daisychains, have six figures which unfold to tell a story in rhyme; others in the series depict babies, witches and snowmen.*

SHIGEO WATANABE: *I Can Build a House*. Illustrated by Yasuo Ohtomo. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30965 0.

FULVIO TESTA: *If You Take a Paintbrush*. Andersen. £3.95. 0 86264 037 7.

IRINA HALE: *Brown Bear in a Brown Chair*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 34852 4.

DAVID MCPHAIL: *Alligators are Awful*. Kaye & Ward. £3.95. 0 7182 3930. X.

VICTORIA CHESS: *Poor Esmé*. Oxford University Press. £4.50. 0 19 279781 6.

TONY ROSS: *The Three Pigs*. Andersen. £3.95. 0 86264 039 3.

NIGEL MCMULLEN: *Lucky*. Heinemann. £4.95. 0 434 95136 6.

Little shockers

Candida Lycett Green

ROALD DAHL
Dirty Beasts
Illustrated by Rosemary Fawcett
Cape. £4.95.
0 224 02053 6

A hundred years after Edward Lear's nonsense songs and Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, Roald Dahl is still providing the fantasies and the shock horror treatment that children will always love. Though Dahl's *verse is less* refined than Belloc's and less elegant than Lear's, it is music to children's ears: particularly such lines as,

I can be home. I shouted, "Mum!
Behold the prickles in my bum!"

Dirty Beasts is Dahl's thirteenth book for children, a sequel to his *Revolting Rhymes*, published last year. These particular tales are reminiscent of Dahl's first collection of grown-up short stories, *Kiss Kiss*, which was first published in 1960. One of the stories there concerns a vegetarian who, on his first taste of pork, becomes obsessed with pigs and ends up being swept onto a conveyor belt in a pig processing factory. The same macabre twist appears in *Dirty Beasts*. For example when a learned pig discovers that the sole reason for his existence is to be turned into bacon, he bashes the farmer to the floor and eats him, declaring,

"I had a fairly powerful hunch
That he might have me for his lunch
And so because I feared the worst
I thought I'd better eat him first."

Perhaps the best of the nine tales in *this book is* "The Ant-Eater". A terrifically spoiled American boy called Roy demands to be given an ant-eater. His father searches far and wide and finally locates one in India, from whence it is shipped to the United States. It arrives all skin and bones and asks Roy for food, but the little boy says, "Go find an ant." As you've probably guessed, Americans, "How ever hard they try they can't," pronounce a simple work like Aunt". So, not unnaturally, the ravenous ant-eater, on being introduced to Roy's "Ant Dorothy", devours her and on discovering Roy hiding behind a pile of manure says, "You little squirt! I think I'll have you for dessert."

Everyone get their just desserts in *Dirty Beasts* and Rosemary Fawcett's vividly coloured and splendidly shocking pictures emphasize this. Horror-struck children with bulging eyes hang on to their equally terrified teddies while greedy Frenchmen brandish carving knives. Rosemary Fawcett's style is a mixture of Beryl Cook and Kit Williams, but the nastiness of her pictures is exceptional as is, incidentally, her ability to paint lupins.

In brief

Spot's Birthday Party by Eric Hill (Heinemann. £4.50. 0 434 94287 1) follows the best-selling *Where's Spot* and *Spot's First Walk* without quite achieving the calculated obviousness which made the earlier books such a success. *This time it is Spot's birthday* and during a game of hide and seek the now-familiar crocodile, bear, snake and monkey are discovered in cupboards, under carpets and behind curtains. They all have a smart remark for Spot (the snake says "Oh, hiss") but there is a certain lameness in the supposedly triumphant ending, with Spot being given his presents and simply saying "Thank you". Eric Hill's style seems to have become coarser, his colours are harsher and the subject entails an awkward anthropomorphism with Spot hiding his eyes and opening parcels. These are the sort of criticisms that are bound to be levelled at a follow-up to an established classic, but Spot is still lovable and the lift-the-flap formula has some life in it yet.

Across the Stream (by Mirra Ginsburg and Nancy Tafuri. Julia MacRae. £4.95. 0 86203 113 3) is a deceptively simple story aimed at the under-fives which is lifted above the ordinary by its minimal text and large *fresh pictures*. Mirra Ginsburg's words have enough drama in them to tell the tale of a hen and three chicks and their escape from a fox. They also have enough intrinsic interest to detain the reader over crisp rhymes ("The hen said Cluck, we are in luck") and intermittent rumba-like rhythms ("a chick on a duckling, a chick on a duckling, a chick on a duckling, and the hen on a duck"). The design is striking: the words are printed in a large clear black-letter script a few words to a page. The pictures are large and fill the *frame*. The whole thing has a clean calm feel about it: it is the sort of book that will stand up very well to the reading and re-reading that this age group always demands.

E.B.

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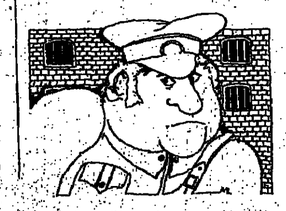
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METHUEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Numbers as fun

Harvey Mellar

Many parents spend a great deal of time helping their children to learn to read, but much less time is spent helping them to use numbers. Children will be taught to count, of course, but what would we think of teaching a child the alphabet and leaving it at that? Parents see words as fun, they enjoy books and they try to share this enjoyment with their children, but I suspect they do not see numbers as fun.

The John Burningham books are part of a series called "Number Play". Readers familiar with his simple story books will recognize his affectionate and witty illustrations which depict clearly accessible situations for the very young. *Pigs plus* describes the journey of a pig in a deeply disadvantaged car. As the journey progresses, more and more bits drop off and a new pig comes to the assistance of the unfortunate driver. Each pig is a number added on. *Five down* is a counting exercise: each number is seen as an object in itself – a baby in a pram throws a huge number one to the ground (it cracks, to the evident satisfaction of the baby), five tiny mice struggle downstairs with their large yellow numeral (when it hits the ground to be broken into five pieces one can clearly detect embarrassed shufflings). *Ride off* is a story of five children who one by one fall from a horse. *Count up* shows various ways in which the numbers one to five can be divided up, for example three frogs skipping becomes two frogs holding a rope and one frog jumping.

The books are designed to be opened out and then unfolded, and this can turn out to be an exercise in patience, distracting from the enjoyment of the contents. The books are easily torn; there is a flap that holds the books closed, and eager fingers tend to tear the front covers in two. Despite this, the books are an enjoyable introduction to numbers and their possibilities, suitable for three to four-year-olds.

Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar is about a jar containing one island, two countries, six mountains, twenty-four walled kingdoms and so on, ending with 3,628,800 jars all within the *original jar*. The *illustrations* are beautiful, full of fine and delicate detail. But there is little connection between them; for example one does not feel that there really are nine boxes in each of the eight cupboards.

The major section of the book can be seen as a counting book – it is followed by pages of dots pointing out the implications of the simple ideas that have gone before, and then a discussion on large numbers and factorials. It is not clear who it is aimed at. Older children may be put off by the picture book style, but the full meaning of the sequence cannot be grasped until multiplication has been understood. It will probably be most useful to a child who is just beginning to learn about multiplication, for the book shows some of the ideas that lie behind *multiplication*, and *gives a hint of* where it leads.

JOHN BURNINGHAM:
Count up. 0 7445 0046 X.
Read one. 0 7445 0043 5.
Ride off. 0 7445 0045 1.
Pigs plus. 0 7445 0044 3.
Five down. 0 7445 0042 7.
Just cats. 0 7445 0041 9.
Walker Books. £2.50 each.

MITSUMASA and MASACHIRO ANNO:
Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar.
Bodley Head. £4.95.
0 370 30958 8.

Children's books of the year 82 has just been published by Julia MacRae Books in association with the National Book League (123pp. £4.50. 0 86203 121 4). The book is an annual annotated listing of titles chosen from the reference library of current children's books of the National Book League.

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A boy-king

Mary Renault

NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS
Alexander the Great
Translated by Theodora Vasils
Peter Owen. £8.95.
0 7206 0604 7

Few important figures of ancient Greece are easily, or at all, accessible to children. Socrates impresses only by the fortitude of his inexplicable death; Pericles is dimly apprehended as the cause of Greek civilization. Xenophon needs his own narrative voice. On the whole one must stick to Herodotus; the others are for the second decade, not the first.

Alexander, however, is a gift. Only the extremes of prejudice or pedantry can make him boring. He is a spoonful of jam with which the medicine of history slips effortlessly down. His virtues and faults are nearly all within the scope of childhood. Brave, handsome, royal, generous, adventurous, beloved; kind to his horse and dog and, usually, to his friends; more chivalrous to his enemies than Coeur-de-Lion who made more fuss about it: a corrective, even, to the notion that heroes don't waste time on books. And, at the end of his lifelong adventure story, age will not wither him nor the years contemn.

He has few dark corners with which to disillusion the teens. Sins done in anger, remorse, any child can understand, as he can the seductive pleasure of dressing up in exotic clothes and feeling important. The needed background is not boring either; nor is the grand design.

A children's book about Alexander, by no less a writer than Nikos Kazantzakis, first published two years after his monumental *Odyssey*, makes expectation soar. Originally serialized (we are not told in what), it is now printed unabridged. The translator says in her preface that, had Kazantzakis lived, he would doubtless have re-edited it. So, indeed, one may hope and believe. A disservice has been done him by reissuing it now.

Alexander is seen at first from the viewpoint of a Macedonian boy, oddly named *Stephan* (there are other eccentric names) whom he befriends and who later joins his staff, fading most of the time into a passive observer. It is hard to account for the constant falsifications of simple history which pepper the book on nearly every page. They reflect no consistent bias; they seem to symbolize nothing; they attempt no analysis, favourable or hostile, of the man; they neither fantasize nor debunk. The overall impression is of something done in tremendous haste, mainly or even wholly from memory, without access to the sources or even a serious classical history. 1940 was a bad year for writers, in Greece as elsewhere; but the potboilers of giants should be accorded decent burial.

To select at random: how is history enhanced when Callisthenes, who was ostentatiously temperate, is portrayed as a boozy old sot? When the tough and capable Hephaestion, mountain campaigner, easoned diplomat, and bridger of the Indus, appears as a doe-eyed and – literally – clinging minion, whom Alexander thinks too delicate to take on the Median expedition? When that magnificent old satrap Artabazus is presented as a grotesque *villain who plans to assassinate* Alexander before his accession, and never appears in Asia? When Alexander wears silver Ammon horns in his hair, prefiguring the coinage of his successors? When he runs up the walls of Tyre on a scaling ladder and jumps down inside, diminishing that towering citadel to a mudbrick fort, and leaving the Mallian arrow as mere anticlimax ("In a few weeks Alexander had completely recovered")? When he, and his companions too, are said to have *ridden* fifteen days and nights without sleep? When he plans, instead of the Arabian expedition, the circumnavigation of Africa?

There are unaccountable omissions. Persepolis never burns. Parmenion vanishes without trace. Roxane never appears at all.

One cannot know if the writing has more texture in the original, or the dialogue more style. Slips, such as epigram for epitaph, occasionally give the adult reader pause, and will certainly bemuse the juvenile one.

Though it is a pity to start young readers off in such a general mist of error, it would matter less if, in the sum, the essential Alexander came through. But what emerges is an icon which barely survived into the nineteenth century. As a boy he is not simply a *Wunderkind*, as he may well have been; he is born complete, and undergoes virtually no development. At thirteen or so, seeming to take for granted the date of his own accession, he is all ready to conquer the world and bring to it the benefits of Hellenism; *though this, as the tale proceeds, he is* seldom seen to do. There is no considered strategy, no adaptation, no



One of Robin Jacques's drawings from Kings and Queens *by Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon (Dent. £5.95. 0 460 06127 5).*

hint that his Persian robe had any political significance. He is the mere conqueror of hostile tradition, yet the point is never discussed nor, it would seem, perceived. One thinks all too often of Stephen Leacock's hero who "flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions". Five minutes after arriving anywhere, without consulting anyone or receiving any intelligence, he mounts Bucephalas, signals for the army to turn out on the spot, and is off to the next objective, often without *disclosing it: "Let them grumble.* It's enough that they obey." So basic a misreading of Macedonian kingship and social structure, and of Alexander himself, is hard to excuse.

As the story begins, and the young Stephan is seen at home, there is a rather charming vignette of Greek village family life, opening vistas of another, unpretentious and better book. Even here, though, a little Macedonian girl goes off, like a Spartan, to the gymnasium with the boys.

The flyleaf of the book announces its acceptance by Unesco as an educational work. One can only speculate on the system by which this accolade is bestowed.

New readers start here

Ann Thwaite

EVA IBBOTSON
The Worm and the Toffee-Nosed Princess
0 333 32034 4

WILLIAM MAYNE
A Small Pudding for Wee Gowrie
0 333 34080 9

JAMES RIORDAN
The Boy Who Tirried Into a Goat
0 333 32229 0

ANN LAWRENCE
Beyond the Firelight
0 333 34081 7

Macmillan: Flying Carpets. £3.95 each.

Macmillan's new series, "Flying Carpets", declares that it "bridges the gap between first picture books and longer stories", but even those children who have learnt to read with picture books may find these attractive collections quite hard going at first. Though the format is closer to World's Work's "I can read" books and Collins's Beginner Books, Flying Carpets are actually a stage beyond such series as Blackbirds and Gazelles, and probably even more demanding than Antelopes, although each page is illustrated and paragraphs are brief, there is not much effort to control vocabulary or sentence structure. The reader is expected to cope with this sort of thing: "The Kraken also liked a rather dotty sea-witch who roared about muttering spells which began with words like 'Sweery, sweery linkum-loo' and usually ended with someone being turned into a sea cucumber".

Eva Ibbotson's *The Worm and the Toffee-Nosed Princess and other stories of monsters* (from which the quotation comes) is great fun and full of spendidly moral tales which are also satisfyingly chilling. The generally applicable moral is "Serves her right", but it may be something less useful such as "Never try to kick a Boobrie bird". The readers of these collections will need to have sufficient decoding skill in order not to be deterred by a large number of proper names which they are unlikely to have come across before, such as Nebuchendrie, Brollechan, Fusith, etc. Indeed, although the stories in this series purport to be "either based on, or retellings of, folk *and fairy tales*", most of them are unfamiliar and some of them are surely the authors' own inventions. The Fusith, in one of Eva Ibbotson's stories, is a rather wet sort of evil fairy who is always saying to her son, a splodgy Brollachan, "Why don't you do something with your life?" – a joke which might be appreciated more by reluctant readers of riper years. In fact, the whole series might well work as well with adolescents as with the bright six-year-old.

William Mayne's *A Small Pudding for Wee Gowrie and other stories of underground creatures* is likely to be particularly popular. William Mayne's been able to adapt himself to the both sorts of funny. He has always been able to adapt himself to the abilities of new readers. (Witness such *small masterpieces as The Big Wheel and the Little Wheel*, first published nearly twenty years ago.) And his contribution to this series, for all its oddity, is probably the easiest to read. There is a lot of casual rhyming which makes Mayne's always individual angle sound even stranger than usual, especially when read aloud. "A path goes somewhere, always, or it would not be there. This one knew the rule, and led to the mouth of a cave".

Students of Bruno Bettelheim, who have studied "the uses of enchantment", may pause and consider the more disturbing implications of some of these stories, particularly in the title story of James Riordan's book. But most of us will simply accept that quite young children, who would be upset by violence and fear in a contemporary setting, can enjoy the "shivers" induced by these impossible happenings. The stories in *Beyond the Firelight and other stories of hobgoblins* are more familiar and rather less satisfying than the best ones in the Mayne, Ibbotson and Riordan collections, but all four books are worth having. In recent months Macmillan's list has seemed to grow itself on film and television tie-ins. It is good to see them launching a useful new series.

Writing down

Alan Brownjohn

VERNON SCANNELL, GREGORY HARRISON and LAURENCE SMITH
Catch the Light
0 19 276050 5

ROY FULLER, BARBARA GILES and ADRIAN RUMBLE
Upright Downfall
0 19 276052 1
Oxford University Press. £4.50 each.

These two trios of poets arrive in attractive hardbacks offering a different image from some recent volumes of "popular" poetry for children: relatively staid, but with good clear typography, space on the pages, and no jokey illustrations. It would be pleasant to say that they represent a successful reaction against the tendency to think that poetry for children should be less subtle, less technically skilled, less varied in theme and imaginative scope. Unfortunately this does not quite happen; and it is to be hoped that future volumes will offer more consistency, more substance and more originality.

Catch the Light takes its title from Laurence Smith's opening poem, which is fey and Georgian indeed for the first page of a new series:

Do you call it spring again –
When midges start to bite
and blackbirds find a singing bough
and celandines catch light?

This ought to be within the experience of children, but expressed that way it is more in tune with children's experience of the dimmest old school anthologies. The children of his "Birmingham", for example, ("No streams to dam / No daring hunt in a haunted wood") might not see it like that; they might even see romance in a spaghetti junction. In any case the appeal of nature ought to be more simply registered.

Smith's bird poems and his extended, ambitious "Gift of the Magi" will give them more to think and puzzle over; as will the work of Gregory Harrison. Harrison has a genuine talent for spotting the poetry in unlikely places: the sight of a squirrel up a telegraph pole, a parade of swans across a car park, a brush with a porcupine, the weird task of thawing a "Frozen Hose":

the plastic snake
Stinks, retches,
Regurgitates its gelid meal,
Tinkles out
Its neat, glass cylinders.

Nostalgic evocation is his strong point, in poems about trotting-horses circling a field, or the sand-hole forbidden to his grandfather (who is fascinated by the turkey-house instead), or "Trams": ". . . on the upper deck, / Shrunk in one water-cape / The two-humped shape / Of man and girl, / Who sway and cling / To a wet, slatted seat." Ideas are sometimes slightly overplayed, but an engagingly sinister note in Harrison's imaginings give his poems the feel of something different and *distinctive*.

This cannot be said of Adrian Rumble's poems in *Upright Downfall*, hard as they strive for a novelty of subject-matter. Children themselves often write better than adults writing down to them, and would surely expect more thrills and fantasies from lunar travel than Rumble provides in "Burning Burning Moonward":

Gliding gliding moonward ·
dancing through a void
turning to the music
of star and asteroid.

These poems suggest that interstellar space has not engaged the writer's own imagination; and to have one's heart in the right place (in his best pieces, "I Dreamed Earth Was Dying" and "Starburst") is no substitute. Barbara Giles specializes in mildly surrealist word-play ("Was an if upon a stair / met a when without a where") with a line in daft titles ("Fewery, Mostery, Somery", "Upright Downfall"). The imagination here is a slim creature, feeding on an innocuous tradition of light verse ("Now you have a papagouli / do be sure to treat it right"), or on Graham and Belloc ("Mrs Lorris, Who Died of Being Clean".)

As so often, the most experienced and talented poets in these books make *the strongest impression, writing as* well for children as they do for adults. This is not to say that Vernon Scannell is on his best form in *Catch the Light* (a long and rather slacky written ballad, "Wee Duncan and Red John", uses up a disproportionate amount of space), but that he writes nothing which lacks technical assurance, intelligence and wit. "Dominoes" is gently unnerving ("Old men in corners, / Caps, mufflers, glasses of mild; / Clicking of old bones"), and "Rhyme-Time", with its chimes and half-chimes will delight any reader who has begun to enjoy subtle sounds and verbal ingenuities.

Roy Fuller, in artfully informal vein, dominates *Upright Downfall*, whether advising on "How to Boil an Egg (and Eat it)" or recording his ambiguous relations with the cat Tompkins. He has the right touch for the bizarre matter of what is protruding through his sock: "Walking along, / My right big-toe seemed wrong. / When I took off my shoe / I saw a head peeping through." And his "Waiting for the Prince" is not only the best poem in either of these two books but shows Fuller at his most elegant and poignant:

in an awful mess
Slumbered the young Princess . . .
Like a bag of bits of string her hair;
Her toes not over clean, and bare.
Her grandfather, passing by,
Let out a pitying sigh:
And put things in drawers and her to bed –
Because you never know (he said)
Soon someone else who cares
May catch her unawares.

This is not strictly a "children's" poem, but neither are many of the most magical poems for children; a truth which seems to need to be re-learnt all too often.

Relocating Cinderella

T. A. Shippey

ALAN DUNDES (Editor)
Cinderella: a Folklore Casebook
311pp. Garland Publishing $35.
0 8240 9295 5

In the Grimms' version of the Cinderella story the greedy stepdaughters cut their stepfather for clothes and jewels; but Aschenputtel herself asks only for the twig that brushes her father's hat, so she can plant it on her mother's grave, water it with tears, and wait till the bird that sits on it comes to grant all her desires. What can this twig mean? The whole story, says Aarland Usher in one of the eighteen essays collected here, concerns the Soul's quest for its Image, and the hazel twig is the Tree of Life knocking with perpetual reminder on human self-satisfaction. Not at all, declares Ben Rubenstein, a Freudian psychiatrist who bases his theory on observing his own small daughter: the hazel twig that grows to a tree is a clear case of penis envy, and the whole tale is about "clitoral libido" evolving into "full vaginality".

Or is it a solar myth, in which Cinderella is the dawn? She alternates between brilliance and eclipse, observes one essay; the first known version (Chinese, ninth century) dresses her in blue and gold, according to another. When it comes to versions, the more than six hundred now discovered allow virtually free play to the would-be interpreter. "Beautiful Wassilissa", in a Russian variant, is educated by the cannibal witch Baba Yaga, who rows herself round in a mortar and pestle: signifying condition, declares Marie-Louise von Franz, for *contrario* is from *utero*, to find. And there must be some condition in the tale, virtually everyone agrees, or guilt and remorse, for surely the death of the mother, which leaves the little girl with only wicked rivals to beat, is just too convenient. The division into stepmother/godmother looks like a psychological contrivance too; as do the scenes with the glass slipper, the prince fitting it on, the rivals being mutilated and left bleeding as they try to meet the suitor's demands.

There are, as this collection is out to show, dreadful problems in the way of the fatally attractive exercise of interpreting fairy tales. No one can be sure what a fairy tale *is*. Is it one version, a clutch of related versions, the whole enormous corpus assembled by folklorists? If no detail can be considered so vital that it cannot survive beyond change, should any weight be put on any individual incident? Alan Dundes, though even-handed in his allocation of space to structuralists, Jungians, anthropo-sophists *et al*, is nevertheless clear in his disapprobation of "armchair critics" who have no awareness of the variation problem at all. However, his praise for the indefatigable folklorists who have amassed the material hardly convinces in the light of Archer Taylor's "Study of the Cinderella Cycle", with its tedious flattening résumés.

The conviction one ends up with, in fact, is that not much can be known about how fairy tales work, because they are so *contextless*. Modern scholars tend to think the tales are about development problems – in Cinderella's case, sibling rivalry – but that may be because they have been relegated to infant status by change of fashion. One fascinating essay here, by Margaret Mills, relocates *Cinderella* very firmly in the context of a Muslim ritual of (adult) female solidarity, in which it is the way mothers, daughters and sisters all betray but forgive each other that turns out in the end to be critical.

However the main message of this collection is "armchair critics should at least review the literature"; and every facility is offered for that in future, with long bibliographies and masterly introductions by Dundes to each of the essays selected. It's true, too, that critics can learn something from folklore method. Not many will be convinced by Dundes's own essay arguing that *King Lear*, viewed as a Cinderella variant, turns out to be an incestuous fantasy for a daughter (Cordelia desiring Lear). Still, Shakespeareans should have been more aware of indexes and studies of the "love-test" motif, and the "Thou rascal beadle" speech is indeed a classic account of the psychological contrivance of "projection", so deeply rooted in all the "Cinderella" tales – except perhaps Walt Disney's.

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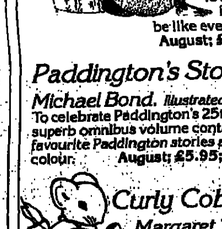
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Volume 11, 1983, *of Children's Literature*, the annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Literature and the Children's Literature Association, edited by Francelia Butler (233pp. Yale University Press. £16.50, paperback £7.50, 0 300 02991 8), has recently been published. It contains two articles which emphasize feminist themes in Victorian children's books: "'Quite contrary': Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*" by Elizabeth Lennox Keyser and "Little Girls without their Curls: Female Aggression in Victorian Children's Literature" by U.C. Knoepflmacher. The volume also contains two articles on *Babar*: "Jean de Brunhoff's Advice to Youth: The *Babar* Books as Books of Courtesy" by Ann M. Hildebrand and "The Reign of King Babar" by Harry C. Payne. There are essays on *Little House on the Prairie*, *Pinocchio*, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, "Aspects of Pastoral in the Green Knowe Series" and "The Fresh-Air Kids, or Some Contemporary Versions of Pastoral". Among the books reviewed are *A Visit to William Blake's Inn* by Nancy Willard and books on the work of Edward Ardizzone and E. H. Shepard. The book concludes with an article by Naomi Lewis on "The Road to Fantasy".

The lessons of life: school stories

Sarah Hayes

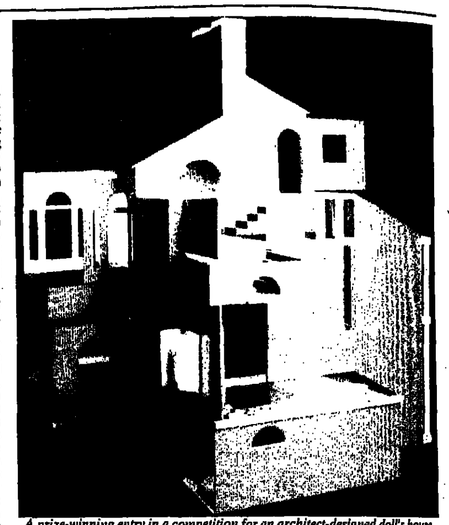
A bookseller recently attributed the waning appeal of children's books to the "patronizing series of flaccid novels with fifties jackets and not a punk or ra-ra skirt in sight". She might have mentioned leg-warmers, too, which Jan Mark lovingly documents in this unsettling collection of short stories about and for teenagers. The four best stories are reprinted from anthologies, and it is a pleasure to have them gathered together with four new stories in one elegant volume decorated by Bert Kitchen's stunning precision drawings. "Wrinkly legwarmers that look like lagging on old water-pipes" are reproduced in tangible disarray, making the fingers itch to pull them up.

Jan Mark's everyday settings are loosely connected with institutions – a *tennis tournament*, a *school stage*, a train, a studio, a chapel. And in the best tradition of short stories, what happens in them is a change in emphasis; a shift in viewpoint rather than any major event. A boy overhears a stranger on a train describe his mother as a nagging bitch: she is, and he knows it, but now he can accept it. A stage-lighting freak who thinks Shakespeare is "an effete twit" changes his mind when the isolated world of his lighting cradle is invaded by a real person. A girl uses an answering machine to revenge herself on parents making a mess of their marriage.

Occasionally the adolescent has a glimpse of adult vulnerability, which gives him the upper hand. He can be sympathetic, or hostile as in "Still Life: Remote Control", an excruciating contest between the insufferable certainty of the art student, with youth and talent, and the tired experimentalism of his middle-aged teacher. As well as seeing into their minds, Jan Mark has listened to teenagers talking. What she has heard and reproduced is the jokey nature of adolescent communication: unless talking about the opposite sex, most *articulate teenagers seem* to communicate by way of silly voices, bad (if agreeable) puns, and a sort of standard jokespeak derived from the Goons by way of Monty Python and followers.

There is no patronizing in *Feet* and, more surprisingly, no attempt at empathy. This is how you are, says Jan Mark, and I rather like it, but it's not me. *SUS falls into the empathy trap.* It attempts to get inside its teenagers, its policemen, its blacks, its middle-class, its working class, its rebels, and its do-gooders. And it's bound to fail. Fay Sampson argues (probably rightly) that children in urban areas can, through no fault of their own, become undesirables in the eyes of the law. The friendly bobby who gave you road safety lectures last year becomes the fascist pig who puts the boot in your head. The reason? You are sixteen and dressed like other sixteen-year-olds and you go about in groups. Fay Sampson has tried terribly hard to be fair on the police who are seen to run gym classes for young people, organize discos, play flutes (well, *a* flute), and to be sensible and caring when not provoked; and she has made great efforts to be critical of naive dogooders. But there is no mistaking the author's certainty that innocent young people are manoeuvred into violence by a fearsome and brutal system of law enforcement. Message apart, *SUS* paints a colourful picture of a group of sixth-formers running an amateur rock group – a real-life study to judge from the dedication: "To the Amazing Rubber Band and friends *without whose help I could have saved* myself a lot of trouble".

The token girl in *SUS* is an unlikely dreamy creature who gets away with murder – most real girls would find her *a bit of a twit. The eponymous heroine* of *Alice's Part* is one of those introspective sombre girls so beloved of children's authors. This novel, aimed at older children rather than young adults, is another interesting but flawed piece. The action, which is nicely conceived and executed, takes place during the flooding of the Thames when Alice's grandmother is drowned. The plot jumps from one set of people and circumstances to another rather in the manner of Ed McBain: from Alice's friend's burglar father rescuing flood victims, to Alice's father searching the hospitals for his mother. If Alice herself played her part in the book as well as in the school play, she might tie up the disparate elements, but she remains a shadowy and not very sympathetic figure. The gathering flood, *though*, is splendid and thoroughly sinister.



A prize-winning entry in a competition for an architect-designed doll's house. The models will be on show at Sotheby's St George Street Gallery from August 8 to September 6.

Alice's headmistress is last seen showing her human face, vowing to worry less about standards and more about togetherness. Teachers are human beings, though parents and pupils alike have difficulty in recognizing this. One of the good things about the *Grange Hill* comprehensive school television series is that it presents a staff composed of nice and nasty ordinary people. Readers of the *Grange Hill* books (hugely popular with primary school children) can revel in the petty squabbles of the staffroom and the irreverent attitude of pupils and staff alike to the frosty headmistress who turns out a good sport in the end. *Grange Hill Home and Away* is the mixture as before: snappy dialogue; a few good jokes; pseudo-epic narrative interludes; and the pleasing humiliation of the current bully "Gripper" Stebson.

Robert Leeson leaves Grange Hill to take one of its pupils, Superstar Tucker Jenkins, into the real world of the Job Centre (*Forty Days of Tucker J.*, is aimed at teenagers). Six weeks of idling, drinking, muckshovelling, being taken for a ride, and motorbike repairing find Tucker J. marginally sadder and wiser, and no further on. The unemployed school-leaver is perhaps too depressing a subject to make good reading (though the television series has been popular); certainly Grange Hill out of school seems to have lost its zest.

Back in the classroom, tough Miss Pritchard of *The Siege of Cobb Street School* is a fine example of the old-style teacher – a large autocratic lady who is a dab hand at bullies and thus entirely competent to deal with the two baddies who hold her class hostage. A pool of *confiscated plastic blood* and the descent of the prizewinning *Observer* class collage provide a triumphant finish to a cheerful adventure for seven to ten-year olds. There are no pretensions to realism here, although the children – all talk and conjuring tricks – will be familiar to many.

Pupils and teachers take second place in Beverly Cleary's *Ralph S. Mouse* (the S stands for smart), the tale of a motor-bike-riding rodent who moves into school for a quiet life. The mouse admires the teacher's long shiny hair – perfect for tying up his bike's exhaust – but he finds school life pretty hectic, especially when the class decide to do a great mouse project and Ralph is displayed in a goldfish bowl and made to run through a cardboard maze in a learning experiment. Beverly Cleary never lets her ironic view of school life dominate the mouse's adventure, cementing herself with the odd detail such as Ralph's diet of library paste and lentils that have fallen off Class Five's collage. The setting is a bonus in a lively story for the under-tens.

Jan Mark's teenagers abuse each other in a characteristic unimaginative aping of adult invective ("vindictive little cow" and the primary age group is much more adventurous. "Soggy pancake", "bootface" "spaghetti legs", "copper-bottomed four-flushing demon", "monster", "beast" "fiend", and "freak" are applied variously in *The Mintyglo Kid*. Dreadful Denzil is an eight-year-old fiend/freak/monster who autographs his crimes with the words "Batman" in Mintyglo toothpaste. The story turns on a vital cricket match which reveals the dreadful Denzil to be a brilliant batman in more than just toothpaste. Too much shouting, barking, splatting and kerpowing mars an otherwise enjoyable and undemanding read for the nine to eleven age range, notable also for its bossy black heroine who usefully disposes of a range of prejudices.

The children in Miss Mee's reception class in *Tales from Allotment Lane School* are carefully multi-ethnic. The documentation of first-school life is carefully done: the variety of food brought to school, fear of the older classes, escaped caterpillars, reverberations of home life – all will strike chords with adults. But do very young children want to be told it like it is? These are not so much stories as vignettes of school life. Only "Ian's useful collection" stands as a good read-aloud story. And it has to be said that the shade of Joyce Grenfell hovers over the tale of the muddled-up cardies and Miss Mee's immortal words: "What a shame we have some sillies Who have no names inside their woollies."

Education does have its light moments; in fact it's not nearly as serious a business as teachers try to make out. So the question remains: why are the only successful school stories boarding school romances and television spin-offs?

JAN MARK: *FEET and other stories*. Kestrel. £4.95.0 7226 5839 7.

FAY SAMPSON: *SUS*. Dennis Dobson. £5.95. 0 234 72299 1.

VERA BOYLE: *Alice's Part*. Macmillan. £5.95. 0 333 3427 0 4.

ROBERT LEESON: *Grange Hill Home & Away*. BBC. £5.95. 0 563 20130 4.

ROBERT LEESON: *Forty Days of Tucker J*. BBC. £5.95. 0563 20181 9.

HAZEL TOWNSON: *The Siege of Cobb Street School*. Anderson. £2.95. 0 86264 041 5.

BEVERLY CLEARY: *Ralph S. Mouse*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.95. 0 241 10883 7.

GILLIAN CROSS: *The Mintyglo Kid*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 25420 9.

MARGARET JOY: *Tales from Allotment Lane School*. Faber. £4.50. 0 571 11992 1.

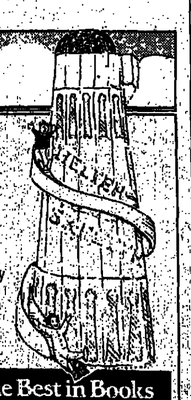
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SUMMER READING

Helter-Skelter
An anthology compiled by Pamela Oldfield
A delightful illustrated anthology of stories and poems old and new. Contributors include James Reeves, Charles Causley, Ted Hughes and many other well-known names and there's a short biographical section about each author to acquaint children new to poetry with different writers and different kinds of fiction. £5.50 6-8

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Blackie & Abelard The Best in Books for Children

to the editor

The Virtues of Cyril Connolly

Sir, – Everything that Julian Symons says about Cyril Connolly is true (in his notice of David Pryce-Jones's book, July 8) – the sloth, the sloth-as-an-excuse, the snobbery, the dilettantism are all well attested. Yet I wonder if he does justice to the *work*.

First, Connolly could be considered a comic genius on the evidence of the best of his short pieces. Unless there is to be no literary posterity, and the Bomb "does for us", surely the parody of Huxley ("Told in Gath"), "Felicity" (female first novels) and "Where Engels Fears To Tread" deserve a place in some imaginary pantheon devoted to Great Humour? Even though generations grow up that have never heard of Brian Howard (and perhaps not missed much) this last little fantasy *à clef* should be valuable; it exactly complements Anthony Blunt's *statement* that all the University intellectuals in the 1930s were Communists – or thought themselves to be. It is, in fact, a small historical document. Parodies, too, do occasionally outlive their originals ("You are old, Father William" and "'Tis the voice of the Lobster").

Second, it is at least arguable that *The Unquiet Grave*, written in 1942–43, is the great lost war poem of the Second World War – written by a civilian, and civilians suffered as much or more than the soldiers in that war, with the various massacres, the concentration camps, the starvation and displacement. Connolly, of course, didn't suffer these; he missed the social life and the travel in France. He was, however, effectively in exile, cut off from the civilization he admired. To this is added "lost love and lost youth", a nostalgia where the elegiac tone is genuine and heartfelt.

Third, there are very good bits in this Journal, well up to the standard of *The Unquiet Grave*.

Last, great honour should be done to a man who could describe his native land in its post-1945 manifestation as "Jewish, overcrowded, bureaucratic England, land of cut films, banned books and little class-conscious moustaches".

GAVIN EWART.

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Language Acquisition

Sir, – "Modelling the theory [of how children learn languages] . . . remains an excellent test of its rigour, consistency and completeness" claims P. N. Johnson-Laird (Letters, June 24). Yet a "complete" theory would have to reflect the uses made of language for purposes other than *transmitting* and *receiving* information – jokes, puns, swearing, ritual/incantatory, expressing love and hatred when it would not be convenient to do so "in clear" and doubtless many other such uses. It is difficult to see how these could be "modelled" in computer terms. Another problem the theory might be able to handle, but not the computer model, is where "correctness" fits in. English children who are rising in the world learn not to refer to their napkins as serviettes (and if they are going down in the world, not to refer to the knives and forks as "the silver" at their local comprehensive)! *Children themselves* decide what counts as "correct" according to external criteria. How could a model assess such criteria?

Perhaps language acquisition is more like a game, played *sometimes* for real, sometimes for fun, that you get better at the more you play. But not a game like chess, which notoriously lends itself to computer modelling. More like table-tennis, where every situation seems unpredictable because of the dynamics. If so, it will be impossible to "show that the program learns in the same way as children" because there will be no *one* way.

MICHAEL W. D. WHITE.

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Ernest Newman and Wagner

Sir, – I must thank Mr Nicholson for correcting me about Ernest Newman's providing of the dates of the first *Ring* cycle in Volume Four of *The Life of Richard Wagner*, though Mr Nicholson says that he gives them in the second half of Chapter 26, whereas in fact he gives them on the second page of that chapter. That doesn't, of course, do anything to excuse my carelessness.

However, it is notable that Newman provides the dates in the context of dismantling Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's account of why her brother left Bayreuth when he did, and the dates are provided in the chapter entitled "Elisabeth's False Witness", and not in the chapter "The Festival and After", where one might expect them. The fact that the latter chapter is fourteen pages long – not a great deal of space to devote to the crowning achievement of Richard Wagner's life – whereas sorting out the time of and reasons for Nietzsche's departure occupies forty-nine pages, seems to me to substantiate as conclusively as possible my claim that Newman's sense of proportion had deserted him. He tells us in the foreword to Volume Four that he had intended to write a book on Nietzsche, but finally decided to incorporate the material in the Wagner biography; the result is a disastrous imbalance. And the same is true of much of the last volume, which has much more the aspect of a series of scholarly essays on aspects of the chronology of Wagner's life than a majestic biography, such as the first three volumes present us with. The fact that Newman chose to conclude the whole vast undertaking with a savage attack on one paragraph of a review of Volume Three reinforces the point.

MICHAEL TANNER.

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English Literary Manuscripts

Sir, – On June 30, 1978 you kindly published an appeal on my behalf for information as to the whereabouts of various "lost" manuscripts to be recorded in Volume 1 (1450–1625) of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. As a result of response from your readers this appeal led to the rediscovery of several relevant items.

May I now make a similar appeal in connection with my forthcoming Volume 2, covering the period 1625–1700 (and including a supplement to Volume 1)? I list below some of the more notable "lost" items to be recorded. Any information as to the present or recent whereabouts of any of these items will be very greatly appreciated.

I may add that the authors to be included in Part 1 of Volume 2 are: Aphra Behn, Sir T. Browne, Bunyan, S. Butler, Carew, Clarendon, Congreve, Corbett, Cowley, Crashaw, Davenant, Denham, Dorset, Dryden, J. Earle, Etherege, Evelyn, Farquhar, Fuller, W. Habington, Halifax, J. Harrington, Herrick, Hobbes, H. King.

APHRA BEHN, letter to J. Tonson (Sotheby's, March 17, 1930, lot 183, to Maggs).

ABRAHAM COWLEY, letters, notably to Sir Robert Long (Sotheby's, April 13, 1905, and July 25, 1938), besides Bodleian, Pennsylvania and Yale and to Henry Bennet (recorded 1702).

RICHARD CRASHAW, *Steps to the Temple* (1648 edition), partly made up of proof-sheets and with MS copies possibly by Dudley Lovelace (Sotheby's, May 3, 1937, Lord Aldenham sale, lot 553, to Dobell).

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT, letters, petitions and presentation copies of *Gondibert* (1651).

DIARIES: by Dr Edward Lake (1642–1704), Archdeacon of Exeter (G. P. Elliott, 1847), and John Rous (*b* 1584), incumbent of Santon Downham, Suffolk (Dawson Turner, 1856).

JOHN DRYDEN, any printed or MS books owned or annotated by him, notably presentation copies of *Fables* (1700), besides Trinity College Spenser and Yale Juvenal.

HENRY KING, letters, especially John Hannah collection, including letters by King (to Richard Powell, 1639) and by IZAAK WALTON (1612) (Sotheby's, December 9, 1929, lot 152, to Dobell: the catalogue giving no indication of the importance of this collection), and a series to Mr More of Morehouse, Sussex (W. R. W. Stephens, 1881).

RICHARD LOVELACE, inscription "Richard Lovelace, 1630, March 5" in copy of Nicolas Clenardi, *Institutiones Graecae Linguae* (1628).

ANDREW MARVELL, MS of Restoration verse owned in 1930s by Marvell's editor H. M. Margoliouth, and letters besides those printed by Margoliouth.

JOHN MILTON, books purporting to be owned by Milton (besides Harvard).

MISCELLANIES AND COMMONPLACE BOOKS, of: Mary Browne, 4to, 86 leaves, with poems by Donne, Corbett, Wotton, *et al* (P. J. Dobell, *Literature of the Restoration*, 1918, item 1240); Valentine Cabech of Pembroke College, Cambridge, c 1680 (C. W. Brodribb, 1926); Richard Duke (1652–1733) of Otterton, Devon, 8vo, *c* 800 pages, *c* 1667 (A. de Castro Glubb, Liskeard, Cornwall, 1918).

KATHERINE PHILIPS, (i) letter to Dorothy Temple, January 22, "1664" (Maggs, cat. 646, 1937, item 525); (ii) any other original letters; (iii) MS poems, folio, 259 pages, Phillipps MS 4001 (Sotheby's, November 11, 1946, lot 164, to Myers).

THOMAS RANDOLPH, MS play *The University Pedlar* (Richard West in 18th century, afterwards the Revd Mr Collins of Knaresborough, West Yorkshire).

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH, letters and documents in private ownership.

EDMUND WALLER, *Poems* (1664) with MS copies of poems by Waller at back (F. Cunningham, *Notes & Queries*, March 10, 1866).

IZAAK WALTON, books owned, inscribed or annotated by him.

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY, presentation copies of *Miscellany Poems* (1704).

PETER BEAL.

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Blinded by Mushrooms

Sir, – The editors of *The Merchant of Venice* continue to regard "sand-blind" (II.2.71) as a vulgar term for "purblind" (Arden), "partly blind" (Riverside), "dull of sight" (Signet). There is, however, more to "sand-blind" than meets the eye. In Shakespeare's day "sand-blind" was a term with a socio-medical history and a quasi-medical status. It was associated with the gathering of mushrooms. Gerard's *Herball* (1633) has a detailed discussion of *Fungus orbicularis*, which was known popularly as "fusse balls", "Pucke Fusses", and "*Bulfists*" (*pp* 1582–4). According to Gerard, it had multiple uses: in beekeeping, "to kill or smolder Bees"; in medicine to alleviate the pain of sores and kibed heels; and for rural dwellers an inexpensive method of preserving fire and providing illumination "to carry and reserve fire from place to place". Gerard urged caution in using these mushrooms because "being trodden upon do breath forth a most thin and fine powder, like unto smoke, very noisome and hurtfull unto the eyes, causing a kind of blindness, which is called Poor-blind, or Sand-blind".

The origin, then, of "sand-blind" is fuliginously fungal. Whether or not Shakespeare's Old Gobbo was a mushroom-gatherer (he was surely a wood-gatherer!), he regarded himself as "hand-blind". His son, to outdo him in "such branches of learning" as would enable him to transcend "plain terms" (II.2.60–1), created a new term, "high gravel-blind" (II.2.34). The audience would undoubtedly have been familiar with the ophthalmic condition known as "sand-blindness" and wary of mushroom dust. They would also have been delighted with the tricksy word invented by young Launcelot Gobbo to "defy the matter" – and his father.

CHARLOTTE F. OTTEN.

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Formalism and Marxism

Sir, – *A propos of my review of Terry* Eagleton's *Literary Theory* (June 10) René Wellek points out (Letters, July 15) the historical context in which hostility occurred between the doctrines of the Formalists and those of official Russian Communism. I have long admired Professor Wellek's exact and wide-ranging scholarship, especially in the field of comparative literary theory, and I am sure he is right about this. What I was trying to suggest, however, was something rather different; namely, that all such critical theories and techniques this century have a good deal in common, *and specifically in common with the* Marxist approach. Like Marxism they have been concerned with diagnosis and action, with developing a terminology of theory and a mode of analysis that will "solve the problem". The common reader and critic have never seen their pursuit of true judgment in this light.

JOHN BAYLEY.

St Catherine's College, Oxford.

John Payne Collier

Sir, – Whatever may be the truth about the forgeries with which John Payne Collier has been charged, some indication of his attitude towards source material is provided by the historical introduction and text that he provided to accompany George Cruikshank's illustrations for *Punch and Judy* in 1828. This is one of Collier's earliest works and it is, indeed, a remarkable piece of historical investigation for its time and for such a young man. Strangely, Dewey Ganzel devotes only a passing reference to it in his *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. But a critical examination *reveals what can only charitably be* described as a cavalier treatment of his sources and may, more sharply, be condemned as gross falsification. The details of these were given in a Note I contributed to *Notes & Queries* (I. 1. 1954) and in *A History of the English Puppet Theatre* (1955), so they were available to Dewey Ganzel if he had wished to take account of them.

The fact that the young Payne Collier mingled his erudition with inventing ballads, poems and newspaper articles which he passed off as original sources in what may have seemed a not very serious subject of study is *certainly no proof that the more elderly* scholar invented or even forged Elizabethan documents or Shakespearian annotations. But it is a consideration that should, I suggest, have been alluded to.

GEORGE SPEAIGHT.

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Punting

Sir, – With perhaps the restraint your reviewer of *Punting* (July 15) so kindly attributed to me, I forbore from lamenting the ban on punting at Eton in 1852, and thereby allowed him to describe punting as "the only water sport for grown-ups".

Alas, watermanship at Eton (and in other schools to which it set an example) may have diminished because of the ban. Eton boys consider themselves the best of watermen, but they never afterwards learn its superior skills by punting. In a recent BBC "Nationwide" broadcast, Penny Chuter, senior rowing coach for Britain, said the best age to begin to punt was twelve.

R. T. RIVINGTON.

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Johnson's Dictionary

Sir, – I am *grateful to* Robert DeMaria, Jr (Letters, June 24) for his comments on my letter of May 27 concerning Johnson's *Dictionary*. He gives a very useful sampling of places in the work where Johnson, while faithfully recording their occurrence, nevertheless objects (often with justice) to what he thinks to be illogical or sloppy coinages or perversions of the English language.

But is this evidence of Johnson's desire for *stabilization* of the language? When, as DeMaria points out, he accuses Hooker, Bacon, Sandys and Herbert of "ignorantly" perpetrating the double negative "disannul", is he trying to "stabilize" or "fix" the language by noting this usage? Does he want people to go on using it? Surely not. He is conscientiously carrying out *what he conceives to be his duty of* calling attention to usages that are best avoided if the language is to communicate clearly and unambiguously – let us call it *clarification* or *rectification*.

Many later respected lexicographers have also felt this to be their duty. The Fowler brothers, who compiled *Modern English Usage* as well as the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, certainly did. In a celebrated critique of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* ("The String Untuned", *New Yorker*, March 10, 1962; reprinted in his *Against the American Grain*) Dwight Macdonald fulminated against that work's contributing to the debasement of accurate communication by condoning the synonymous use of *implyinfer, disinterested/uninterested, deprecate/depreciate* and so on, practices which its predecessor had warned against. R. W. Burchfield and his associates are politer than Johnson usually is, but their motive is surely similar when, in Supplement II to the *OED*, they remark of the new signification given in the 1960s and 1970s to *hopefully* (conflicting with its normal sense of "in a hopeful manner"), "(Cf. G. *hoffentlich* it is to be hoped.) Orig. U.S. (Avoided by many writers.)" I *like to think that my letter to you of* March 31, 1972, commenting on the first (and last?) appearance of this confusing neologism in your usually chaste columns, helped to inspire this entry.

Nor are what might be called "social" considerations of usage even yet thought irrelevant. The Fowlers are harsh on the jargon (Johnson's "cant") of advertising and cheap journalism. Macdonald gives an example of what the *latest fake of Webster's Third* might lead to – Johnson admired Goldsmith's literary talent, although he considered him a jerk." I won't comment on the *OED Supplement's* "Orig. *U.S.* (Avoided by many writers.)"

May I take this opportunity to correct some of I. E. Jones's misapprehensions in his defence (Letters, *May 6*) of "Doctor" *Johnson*? Whatever Hawkins's printer chose to put in the running heads of his *Life*, in Hawkins's actual text he refers, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, to "Johnson" *tout court*. Both Hawkins and Boswell record Johnson's intense dislike of the epithet; it was only after Johnson's death that Boswell, from whatever motive, changed the "Mr Johnsons" of his manuscript Hebrides journal to "Dr Johnsons" in the printed version. No editions of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* appeared in his lifetime with "LL.D." on the title-page. Johnson's deathbed request was only that a stone be placed *over his tomb in Westminster Abbey*, not that the letters "LL.D." appear on it. Many of Johnson's contemporaries who held DDs, MDs and LLDs were also often referred to in their time as "Doctor". Must we therefore go on writing "Doctor Swift", "Doctor Goldsmith", "Doctor Smollett", "Doctor Benjamin Franklin" and so on?

DONALD GREENE.

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"Among this week's contributors" appears this week on page 791 and "Author, Author" on page 774.

Working out our purpose

J. N. Gray

DENYS TURNER

Marxism and Christianity

256pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50.
0 631 13118 3

No one these days can seriously question the character of Marxism as a Christian heresy. The imprint of Christian commitments is evident in Marxian thought from the start, in Marx's conception of history as a universal moral drama and in the unflagging moral optimism which always sustained his belief in the inevitability of communism. For Marx's followers, as for Christians, human history cannot be merely a repetition of cycles of growth, maturity and decay in civilizations, as perhaps it was for the Greeks and for Machiavelli and the historians of the Italian Renaissance, for in that conception there is entirely lacking the notion of a beneficent historical providence. As Marx found it understood by Hegel, human history was the progressive and rational development of the possibilities of Spirit in a process that was subject to accident but in which brute contingency could never be in the end triumphant. Hegel and Marx held in common an assumption each of them took for granted, that the intelligibility of human history is given by its end-state or *telos*, in terms of which historical changes are themselves rationally reconstructible.

They were indebted for this assumption to the eschatological traditions of Christianity and to the legacy of Greek rationalism as this had been transformed and passed on to them by writers of the French Enlightenment. In Marx, to be sure, the dependency of this view of history as an intelligible moral drama on Christian commitments is strenuously denied – though the strains evident at this point in Marx's thought are perhaps best treated charitably as expressing a dialectical contradiction in his system rather than as a vulgar empiricist inconsistency. In any event it is as clearly true of Marx as it was of Hegel that his conception of history is indefensible, and for that matter barely intelligible, once it is severed from its historic context of Christian theological doctrine and eschatological hope. It is in Marx's attempt to amputate its religious foundations, while yet preserving the moral hopes that Christianity had nurtured, that the heretical character of his system is most readily apparent, since the pursuit of this object led him to reproduce (in a vulgar and desolate form) the moral content of the Christian faith in a political religion which represented itself as a science of history.

Though the general relations of Christianity with Marxism are clear and intimate, controversy breaks out at every point of detail in any account of their mutual dependency. It is this sheer intellectual difficulty, apart from the obvious political pressure they feel to adapt their faith to the spirit of the age, which has led many Christians to seek dialogue with Marxists. The eminently paradoxical aspect of this engagement is not lost on Denys Turner, who recognizes throughout *Marxism and Christianity* that Marxists are bound to treat as ideological all contemporary defence of Christian belief. Recognition of the intensely problematic aspects of the relations of Marxism with Christianity is, in fact, the most redeeming feature of Turner's book, which otherwise amounts to a forced and unpersuasive argument in support of implausible and sometimes absurd conclusions. Turner's central claim is what he calls the "identity thesis", which asserts that Marxist practice is the only form in which moral life can exist in the modern world, but this thesis is seen to depend on his second large contention, the "strong compatibility" thesis, according to which Marxism and Christianity are in asymmetrical relations of dependence on one another. The overall message of the book is that it is in Marxism; and only there, that the distinctive content of Christian moral life can find a contemporary realization, and Christianity itself cease to be the ideological tool that Marxists have always represented it as being.

Turner's argument in support of these conclusions is complex and sometimes ingenious, but its most distinctive feature is its unselfcritical endorsement of Marxism and its reliance on the conventional wisdom of fashionable academic opinion. Consider here the understanding of morality which Turner invokes in his characterization of Marxism as the "rescued truth" of bourgeois ethics. In this he follows conventional academic opinion in taking for granted that Marxism is an immanent critique of bourgeois ethics. He does not discuss, except to dismiss it as evincing a sort of moralistic fideism, the view that the moral content of socialism is a distinctively proletarian ethical outlook, which aims to resist and not to complete the subjugation of modern society by bourgeois aspirations and values. This was the view of one of Marx's most independent and creative followers, Georges Sorel, whose contributions to the study of the relations of socialism with ethics are ignored by Turner in this book. In fact Turner seems close to sharing the belief of modern capitalism's least reflective apologists, that Christian ethics are bourgeois ethics, a dull potation compounded of Enlightenment humanitarianism with recent conceptions of social justice, and to differ from such apologists only in his assessment of the degree to which bourgeois ethics have achieved a real social embodiment. Altogether lacking in Turner's reflections is the insight, recovered by Christianity's greatest modern defender and Christendom's sternest moral critic, Sören Kierkegaard, that morality is not religious life, but only a prelude to it. Despite his prudent refusal to embrace the absurdities of liberation theology, it is not too much to say that for Turner – as no doubt for many contemporary Christians – God has ceased to be a transcendental object of worship so as to become a prop for moral optimism and political commitment.

Most striking of all, perhaps, is Turner's use of undefended Marxian notions of class and exploitation in his account of the conflicts of modern society. Nowhere does he betray any hint of being aware of the fundamental criticisms, practical as well as theoretical, to which these ideas have been subject over the past century. Indeed, Marx's ontological materialism aside, the truth of every main tenet of Marxism is casually presupposed at every crucial point in the argument of the book. Perhaps Turner supposes the truth of Marxism to be so obvious, or to have become part of the conventional wisdom of academic life, as to stand in no need of defence. At any rate, no effort is ever made by him to persuade a non-Marxist reader (of whom there will presumably be a few) that Marxism is actually true.

The book is littered with many stylistic tricks and infelicities, which inhibit the reader's appreciation of such arguments as it contains. When we are informed that "we are inclined to think of the kiss as a more brutally material action than are the words which say the same" and, twelve pages later, that "it is only insofar as we can understand what a kiss is, that is, understand its rôle within the praxis of loving, that we can kiss at all", it is hard to suppress a smile. One's amused disbelief only increases when one reads the portentous statement that "for the Christian love is 'present' within history *only in the form of its absence*", or the assertion that George Eliot's Mrs Holt cannot speak, but is spoken by the bourgeois discourse of her society. What is missing from the book – or, shall we say, in Turner's idiom, is "present" throughout by *its very absence* – is any reference (other than a ritualistic condemnation of Stalinist unmorality) to the disastrous ironies of Marxism's twentieth-century history. Perhaps the academic Newspeak which Turner writes in – or which, it may be, writes him – prevents him from seeing our century, the century of the Gulag and the Holocaust, as one in which the historical theodicies of Marxism and Christianity become not merely questionable, but frankly incredible.

Paying the penalty

Christopher Kirwan

G. R. EVANS

Augustine on Evil

198pp. Cambridge University Press. £15.
0 521 24526 5

Why does God tolerate evil, or at any rate so much evil as there is? Could he not have made a better job of creation? Or if, as Genesis assures us, the creation was at first "very good", why do we find God permitting its lapse – indeed himself adding to the present mess, for Genesis makes him say, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow"? For some religions the answer may lie in God's failings: he may be cruel or uncaring or powerless before recalcitrant matter. But the Christian God is supposed to be good and almighty, so that for Christians evil presents an intellectual puzzle: the existence of God and the existence of evil are alleged facts in apparent conflict; there cannot be real facts in real conflict; where then do the appearances mislead? This is the Problem of Evil.

Saint Augustine's solution to the problem comes in two parts. The first, largely inherited from Neoplatonism, argues that the evils which exist are elements – even, he is sometimes willing to assert, necessary elements – in an "admirably beautiful" whole. The creation that embraces them is not the work of a bungler or a scoundrel. If it is objected that, nevertheless, God has got his hands dirty in the creative process – he is, after all, the creator of scoundrels, and his distribution of misery shows many signs of unfairness – then Augustine replies with the second part of his solution. *Sin* is the necessary price of free will, but God's responsibility for conferring on men the boon of free will does not implicate him in responsibility for their misuse of it. All other evil (human evil, he presumably means) is God's *punishment*, the *penalty* of sin. In tracing out this latter idea, which had appealed so strongly to the priestly and prophetic writers of the Old Testament, Augustine faced the twin facts that suffering falls on all of us and that if it is inflicted as punishment by a good God it must be inflicted justly, never on the innocent. Everyone, therefore, is guilty; and since suffering begins in the cradle, guilt begins there too: it is original guilt, "originalis reatus".

The Augustinian solution raises serious conceptual problems. Must a good and almighty creator have made the best possible world, or only a good one? Is Augustine's belief in free will compatible with his doctrine of prevenient grace, according to which God not only causes all of men's good choices but does so, in the view of some Augustinian interpreters, irresistibly? And on the other hand, free will, does it exist, is sin its necessary price? Why should not God have seen to it that men freely choose the good, or is that logically impossible? As for original guilt, Augustine supposes that it is inherited from Adam. Are we to regard the human race, then, as a *single legal person*, its members as if were phases of one collective life? Or can guilt be transmitted between persons, like a taint or a debt?

G. R. Evans does not tangle much with these knots. Her book covers a miscellany of topics, some only loosely connected with evil, many quite unconnected with the problem of evil which is the announced subject. As the reader nears the end he realizes that he has been introduced to a wide range of Augustine's voluminous writings; each work selected has been neatly reviewed; and the selections have been ordered to develop a succession of themes. A *lifelike impression* comes across of Augustine as pastor and polemicist, busy, persistent, tigh confident, zealous. Less shows of his merits as an intellectual. Augustine sometimes rises to the clever, self-consciously deploying the rather meagre philosophical equipment he had acquired from Cicero and Ambrose and the Neoplatonists. Sometimes – usually at different times – he rises to the acute and produces passages of argument that are untrammelled by his healthy distrust of sophistication and his not so healthy fear of conflict with Scripture. These *heights, which give him a living* and not just historical interest, are not displayed to us in Dr Evans's picture.

In one particular she follows a line of suspect interpretation. When Augustine says in the *Soliloquies* that *evil is nothing*, "malum nihil esse", he should take his words as rhetorical, not intended for the sober truth. In the context he seems to mean only that evil helps to perfect and not damage the universe as a whole. Elsewhere, similar dicta convey the over-simple, but genuinely Augustinian, thought that evil is a corruption needing good to work on, so that what is purely evil has been utterly destroyed. So far from regarding evil as illusory Augustine notices an argument to the opposite conclusion: fear of it is either well grounded or not; a groundless fear is itself an evil; so evil exists, either way (*Confessions*, 7.5.7).

Because Augustine wrote so much there is room for a review of his doubts and doctrines, some or all of them, to be freshly undertaken from time to time. Dr Evans's volume, although it cannot be rated deeply perceptive, is a careful and readable addition to the genre. The Cambridge University Press has printed the book beautifully, except for one or two pieces of messy Greek type.

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Moved by mind

Kathleen Lennon

ROGER SPERRY

Science and Moral Priority: The Merging of Mind, Brain, and Values

135pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50.
0 631 13199 X

Roger Sperry is concerned in this book to argue for an integration of science with ethics; to argue, in particular, that we can turn to science to establish an ultimate and objective set of values with global application. Moreover, given that human values play such a crucial role in determining the use to which all scientific discoveries are put, he regards the search for their ultimate base as one of the most urgent tasks for science.

Professor Sperry's conviction that science has a role to play in human value theory derives, in his view, from his theory of the mind; the spelling out of which constitutes by far the most interesting part of the book. This theory is termed "mentalism" and is contrasted with both materialism and dualism. Mental phenomena, among which he includes sensations such as pain as well as intentional states such as desires and beliefs, are, it is proposed, genuine inner states of an agent, reducible neither to patterns of behaviour, nor simply to brain states. Dualism of the kind advocated by Sir John Eccles is opposed, however, because mental states are dependent on, and in some sense constituted out of, neurological states. In current terminology mental states are *supervenient* on brain states. None the less mental properties cannot be reduced to neurological properties, because they are higher level functional or organizational properties which cannot be adequately characterized if one remains at the neurological level of description. Such a non-reductive, but broadly functionalist, view of the mind is currently much debated by psychologists and philosophers, whose attempts to equate conscious mental phenomena such as pains with higher-level functional states have so far encountered unresolved difficulties. These, however, are not considered here.

Sperry wishes to assign a genuine *causal explanatory role* to psychological states considered as determinants of behaviour, thus legitimizing psychology and social sciences as genuine sciences searching for genuine causal regularities within their own mode of description:

> the higher order mental patterns and programs have their own subjective qualities and progress, operate and interact by their own causal laws and principles which are different from, and cannot be reduced to those of physiology.

Such a position raises the difficult question of how psychological causal explanations of behaviour relate to possible neuro-physiological accounts. Sperry is opposed to the dualist view that mental states at some stage "break into" the neuro-physiological processes. Rather, he suggests, the relation is one in which the overall organization of the system governs the behaviour of its constituent parts: "Mind moves matter in much the way . . . a molecule governs the travel course of its own atoms, electrons, and sub-nuclear elements in a chemical reaction." He also uses the analogy of "a wheel rolling downhill, carrying its atoms and molecules through a course in time and space . . . to a fate determined by the overall system properties of the wheel as a whole". The relation suggested by these interesting analogies between laws and explanations operating at different levels of description merits much further exposition; but that unfortunately, is not the main focus of the book.

How then, for Sperry, does this theory of the mind point to the integration of science and ethics? In his view it makes it legitimate for science to regard human values as genuine determinants of human decision-making and behaviour. (This is lucky for science, as human interaction from time immemorial seems to have proceeded, pretty successfully, on just such an assumption.) As a consequence the "human value factor" *becomes a subject for scientific* investigation. Moreover the role of science is not to be limited to what we might anticipate from the theory of mind, namely an investigation of the ways in which values are produced, and their influence on behaviour. It is to be entrusted with uncovering ultimate values. The key question is why we should consider this to be a task for scientists. The answer which seems to be suggested is that once we have accepted that values influence the world, and vice versa, then the traditional fact/value distinction has broken down and scientists can take on the task of discovering the good. But such an argument is bogus. Defenders of the fact/value distinction never disputed a *causal* link between facts and values. They rather pointed out that this was not sufficient to establish a *justificatory* one. This point Sperry does not confront.

The ultimate value towards which Sperry believes science directs us is that "the grand design of nature perceived broadly in four dimensions to include the forces that move the universe and created man, with special focus on evolution in our own biosphere, is something intrinsically good that it is right to preserve and enhance and wrong to destroy or degrade". However he himself recognizes that such a characterization leads into difficulty, for "the bad things in nature are as natural as the good". To overcome this he suggests that value rests in "the trends of the creative process towards improved quality of existence". But this leaves open the question of which processes we regard as improving the quality of existence, and Sperry does nothing to convince us that the scientist is in a privileged position to answer this question. Nor, on the other hand, does he tell us

Trying to raise the rent

F. M. L. Thompson

DAVID ENGLANDER

Landlord and Tenant in Urban Britain 1838–1918

342pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0 19 822680 2

Election campaigns habitually induce in politicians an unreal sense of their own importance and an illusion that they are building, or digging, a momentous watershed in the nation's history. A useful corrective to the feeling that general elections make decisive turning-points is to contemplate the year 1915, a year which failed to see a long anticipated general election, because hundreds of thousands were being slaughtered in France and Gallipoli, but which did see the imposition of rent control, arguably the most decisive single stroke of policy in the present century.

The implications of the imposition of rent restriction were profound and far-reaching, not so much for the symbolic importance of the massive interference with the sanctity of property rights and with the operation of free market forces, although that was considerable enough, as for its unavoidable practical consequences in sucking the state, whether in Liberal, Tory, or Labour hands, into the housing business. From rent control there followed, almost as night follows day, controlled tenancies, protected tenancies, rent tribunals, security of tenure, council housing and state subsidies to housing, the retreat of private landlords from the lasting business, the flight of those who could afford it into owner-occupation, the counterbalancing or overbalancing state (which is to say taxpayers') subsidization of owner-occupation, and all the glories and disasters of Tory property-owning democracy, with its delights of social stability and its economic madness of encouraging individual immobility and stimulating the sterilization of savings and investment in bricks and mortar.

Needless to say, the route from rent control in 1915 to the sick economy of the 1980s was hardly straight and simple. There were points along the road where different choices on housing and its financing were possible; and there were sundry other local difficulties – a world war for instance – which did their bit towards shaping our contemporary economy and society. Nevertheless, if one wanted to pick out one single origin of the fundamentally stable, fundamentally unprotesting, fundamentally unenterprising, and fundamentally conservative society of late twentieth-century Britain one could do worse than start with 1915.

Political historians have seldom if ever noticed this, since they are preoccupied with cabinets and elections. The volume of the *Oxford History of England* covering the years since 1914 has no mention whatever of the 1915 Rent Restriction Act, which is passing strange since the volume prides itself on its attention to social trends, but it does discuss the 1915 Treasury "dilution" agreement under which the engineering unions agreed to accept the recruitment of unskilled and female munitions workers. The one certainly helped to win the war; but the other helped to shape a whole way of life for generations to come. It is hardly too much to say that the supply of and demand for housing – which once or twice have actually managed to dominate general elections – have, with all their ramifications into rents, mortgages, building societies, taxation policy, planning, public and private sector investment, the construction industry, and the location of industry, been the single most dominating factor in twentieth-century Britain. To investigate the origins of the decisive involvement of the state in this sphere is, therefore, a work of no small importance.

David Englander's book is, indeed, the first serious study of the origins of the 1915 Rent Restriction Act, and is to be warmly welcomed for that reason. It faces the problems if not squarely, at any rate in massive detail. Dr Englander belongs to the grass-roots school of social historians, and has all its strengths and weaknesses. The great strength is an unremitting and remorseless pursuit of specific detail about the lives and conditions of ordinary people, however seemingly insignificant, and a painstaking reconstruction of the behaviour, attitudes, aspirations, sufferings, and protests of the humble and the downtrodden. One drawback of this approach is that the seemingly insignificant quite often was insignificant: to the genuinely curious it is mildly interesting to learn that there really was such a body as the Lozzells Tenants' Association; but it would appear to have left no mark on Lozzells, wherever that is (we are left to guess that it might be in Birmingham, but then again, from the context, it could equally well be in Glasgow), let alone on the nation.

A larger drawback is the unstated assumption that the only impulse which counts in any explanation of policy and legislation is that coming from the grass-roots. At a certain level of analysis and in the very long run, that may very well be true, in the sense that no fundamental changes occur unless they are supported or tolerated by some groundswell of general opinion or prejudice. In the short run, if we are interested in explanations for the timing and the specific nature of particular acts of policy or legislation, it is self-evidently not true. Thus, in this instance, the wealth of detail and incident which is deployed to "explain" the Rent Act does little more than paint a graphic picture of landlord-tenant relations in working-class districts of Glasgow, Birmingham, Barrow, parts of London, and sundry other large towns, where sporadic and inconclusive guerrilla warfare between shifting groups of occupiers and landlords, agents, or bailiffs over rents and rates was more or less endemic. This was the terrain into which the Rent Act was inserted, and it is most valuable to be told what it looked like; indeed its features have nowhere else been so carefully and minutely observed.

Nevertheless, the obvious conclusion which emerges from the chapters devoted to the pre-history of the Rent Act, roughly two-thirds of the book, is that despite all the friction, conflict, hardship, and protest which is revealed, nothing much of any important happened to affect housing and tenancies before 1914. Certainly tenants organizing themselves into ephemeral, localized, and thinly-supported defence associations did, on occasion, achieve small local victories on details of rate-compounding or on postponing the odd penny or two a week of rent increases. But these skirmishes seem to have had no general significance, and made no impression on the normal pattern of working-class tenancies. It was not any slowly accumulating pressure from below which produced the Rent Act, but the pressures of war, and the circumstance that the war was being fought by a government whose general approach to housing was shaped by its radical Urban Land Reform campaign launched in 1913 in preparation for the approaching general election of 1915 that was never held.



Robert Bakewell hiring out his New Leicester rams for the season, by T. Weaver, 1809, from Animals on the Farm *by Judy Urquhart, to be reviewed in a future issue of the* TLS

This is not a document, or a campaign, to which Englander makes any reference. It did not, to be sure, do anything so explicit as to foreshadow control of rents or the granting of virtually unconditional security to weekly tenants, and might therefore be considered irrelevant. But the details of the proposals which were supposed to solve, or at any rate change the outlines of the housing problem, are less important than the general interventionist approach to firmly entrenched institutions and practices of private property to which the Lloyd George Liberals were committed. It was that commitment, it can be argued, which determined the particular governmental response to the particular situation of 1915 in Glasgow, Barrow, and elsewhere, which in turn provided the critical formative influence for subsequent acts of policy and subsequent public expectations on the housing front.

On the issues of major importance, then, this book provokes questions but does not answer them. Taken as descriptive history, however, it is abundantly successful in recreating what the working classes thought and felt about the houses in which they lived. Since they were not much given to recording their opinions directly, this side of the task has involved drawing painstaking and ingenious inferences from the behaviour of working-class tenants towards landlords and bailiffs, some of it colourful and stirringly combative in rent strikes, much of it a pitiful story of moonlight flitting with unpaid rents and a few tattered belongings in a handcart. The trouble with this side of the book is that it is not always clear which section or stratum of the working class is under the microscope, and the reader is apt to confuse the extremes of poverty, misfortune, and downright dishonesty, with the normal experience of the bulk of the working class. In the pre-1900 part of the book, indeed, Englander is dealing almost exclusively with the dregs of society, who either would not or could not pay any rent, and whose housing was handled by a rather specialized kind of landlord employing rather specialized bruisers as rent collectors. Not surprisingly this unsavoury sub-culture produced an unsavoury version of landlord-tenant relations with an unsavoury legal underpinning.

The connection of this semi-underworld with the respectable working class and its housing was tenuous in the extreme; most of the working class paid their rents regularly, cared for their homes, did not chop up the doors for firewood, and despised the residuum. They did not feel any housing grievances, and did not stage any rent strikes, until wartime rents increased faster than wages, concentrations of munition workers swamped local housing supplies, and wives of volunteer soldiers were left with service allowances which would not cover the rent.

We thus return full circle to the impact of the First World War, which undermines the unity of this book, since it introduced a completely different set of actors into what is presented here as a single drama. If we consider it as narrative social history, however, rather than as analysis, this disjunction does not matter; Dr Englander in effect tells us that in a worm's eye view of what was wrong with urban housing there were different worms seeing different things at different times, and that in itself is worth knowing.

The fruits of apostasy

Linda Colley

J. B. WORDIE

Estate Management in Eighteenth-Century England: The Building of the Leveson-Gower Fortune

36pp. Royal Historical Society. Obtainable from Swift Printers (Sales) Ltd, 1/7 Albion Place, London, EC1M 5RE. £20. (£12.44 to members of the Society).
0 901050 85 7

PHILIP JENKINS

The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan gentry 1640–1790

359pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0 521 25003 X

Despite the Election results, SDP supporters may well take comfort from these two valuable monographs: shrewd apostasy in the past at least, paid ample dividends. Philip Jenkins shows how Glamorgan's eighteenth-century gentry dispensed with much of their residual Welsh culture so as to become assimilated into a wider, richer, English-speaking British élite. While Ross Wordie chronicles the Leveson-Gowers, who sold out in 1745 on the proscribed Tory party (times do change), then went over to Pitt in the 1790s, before opting for reforming whiggery in the 1820s – just in time to pick up a dukedom and two earldoms in 1833, as a reward for backing the Reform Bill. But pragmatism was not enough. What these two books also demonstrate (confirming the work of scholars like Christopher Clay and Lloyd Bonfield) is just how dependent Georgian Britain's élite was on demographic chance. Before 1760 many of the great landed families were not so much buoyed up by a relentless whiggish tide of territorial acquisition and improvement, as playing Russian roulette with biology.

It was the failure of four male lines in succession which first established Sir William Leveson-Gower's importance in 1691. His eighteenth-century descendants never failed to produce male heirs and this unpredictable piece of good luck brought more of the same in its train. Unlike many of their peers, the family's sons tended to marry early and many of their wives died young, leaving their husbands their dowries and the option of speedy re-marriage to other heiresses. Marital links with less fortunate dynasties brought the family the Bath and Albemarle inheritances and, best of all, the Bridgewater estate and canal in 1803. Together with a tough anti-leasing policy and a series of astute chief estate agents, this bounty enabled the Leveson-Gower estates to survive sporadic agricultural depressions, costly elections and political flux in the pre-1760 period. Thereafter, the family profited from the rise in agricultural prices and expanding opportunities for industrial investment.

But it was the four decades after 1790 which were the most crucial in making George Granville Leveson-Gower, 2nd Marquess of Stafford, the "Leviathan of Wealth". The family directed extensive capital into enforcing agricultural modernization on its estates, while its Staffordshire coal-mines helped power Britain's war effort against France. Victory in that war finally freed the family from the spectre of its own losses in the South Sea Bubble and stocks and consols were snatched up with greed, assurance and economic aplomb.

Why this upsurge in aristocratic fortune in a period bounded by two apparent threats to landed predominance, the French Revolution and the Great Reform Act? As yet the answers are far from clear, but Dr Jenkins detects a similar socio-economic pattern in Glamorgan, describing the years between 1790 and 1830 as a "Great Reaction" in terms of the wealth, power and class consciousness of its landed élite. They had not always been so monolithic or so conservative. Indeed, one of Jenkins's most salutary emphases is that seventeenth-century Wales was far from being a royalist, reactionary reserve. The threat to local interests posed by a possible Irish invasion and the Catholic Worcester family meant that many Glamorgan gentry were at best half-hearted in their response to the Stuarts. In 1679, for example, both county MPs were Exclusionists. Proscribed after the Hanoverian Succession, the county's predominantly Tory gentry showed an equally hard-headed attitude to Jacobitism, getting drunk perhaps but rarely going broke, never mind to the scaffold, in its service. Still, the Whig supremacy did mark a change. Again, demographic accident in this period played havoc, many old families dying out to be replaced with English or Anglophile landowners: After 1760 no major Glamorgan family spoke Welsh as its first language, sent its son to Welsh schools or patronized bards. True, there was considerable interest in Welsh medievalism, but Jenkins attributes this to the rootless insecurity of a new gentry class rather than to the atavistic culture of the traditional élite.

The Making of a Ruling Class is a good, reflective and very innovative book. Like Dr Wordie's monograph, it is extensively researched, lucidly written and enriches our understanding of eighteenth-century Britain – a period ill-served with local studies in comparison with the Stuart era. Ironically, however, both of these studies illustrate in very divergent ways the pitfalls of county and family histories.

Much of Wordie's material is intriguing and cries out for wider comment, but he rarely strays from his conventional estate beat. We are told, for example, that by the 1770s the Leveson-Gowers were less reluctant than before to evict old and infirm tenants. An analysis of Game Law administration on the Gower estates might well have indicated whether this novel rigour really did stem from a decline in landlord paternalism (however one construes that term). Although the Royal Historical Society is to be applauded for publishing good but specialist theses like Wordie's more or less as they stand, in this case at least a broader perspective and more extensive revisions would have made for a better book.

By contrast, no one could accuse Jenkins of being parochial. At times, indeed, the county community seems rather lost sight of in his assiduous resort to concepts and catch-phrases imported from English history. "The effective family's "the commercialisation of leisure" and "a disorderly people" are enthusiastically applied to Glamorgan, leaving one unclear whether these were genuinely Welsh as well as English phenomena, or whether this county was just peculiarly anglicized. And there are other problems. If Glamorgan experienced "an urban renaissance" in this period, surely its class divisions cannot have been so linguistically determined as Jenkins implies? What about its middle class, which traded with Bristol and also, increasingly, with radicalism?

But the most intriguing problem raised by this book is also implicit in Wordie's, If there was such an aristocratic upsurge or "Great Reaction" after 1790, how does one account for 1832? Why did the Marquis of Stafford feel obliged to sell out his electoral interest in Lichfield and Newcastle in 1826? Why was a uniquely wealthy and compact Glamorgan ruling class apparently so concerned about electoral dissidence in the early nineteenth century? Is the Reform Act, perhaps, to be seen as a piece of élite panic rather than clever élite politique?

Finding the way

J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson

E. W. ANDERSON

Animals as Navigators

207pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.
0 370 30529 9

Many books on animal navigation have been written by professional zoologists in recent years, but this is probably the first time that a professional navigator has turned his attention to the intriguing zoological problems of how animals find their way from one place to another. The result is a fascinating and surprising book. E. W. Anderson's approach is both broad and novel. Beginning with accounts of stabilizers and the sense of time, he passes on to discuss the senses employed in hunting and avoiding predation, and concludes with explanations of how migrating animals find their way. At times, his comments seem somewhat naïve:

> The octopus, a creature with a reputation for intelligence, though it has been known to devour its own tentacles, lives by hunting and is also pursued by moray eels and by whales. . . . One crustacean, which probably appeared on this planet a hundred thousand years ago, now lives in caves at the bottom of deep oceans where there is no light. . . . Man, the so-called "highest" animal, uses his or her nose mainly to warm the air going into the lungs. . . .

The biologist, trained at all costs to avoid teleological explanations, will doubtless endure numerous "culture shocks" on entering the alien, and in this respect less fastidious, world of the navigating officer. On the other hand, Wing Commander Anderson, a former Pathfinder, sheds the light of his deep understanding on the complexities of nature in a manner that many biologists would do well to emulate:

> Dragonflies, which travel very fast, have heavy heads and it requires more energy to rotate them than other parts of their bodies. Tufts of bristle round their necks can therefore sense angular accelerations . . . . Bees are busy creatures and do not like stopping work every time the sun goes behind a cloud. Fortunately, their eyes, being small, can detect the very short ultra-violet light waves which *penetrate cloud* . . .

while dolphins and toothed whales have "ear-holes which are lopsided, one higher than the other, like the flaps of an owl. So, when they are using sonar, they weave their heads from side to side and also nod up and down." Elementary wave-theory shows that animals can use radio only in a very restricted fashion, while the sonar designer's preference for ultrasonics emphasizes the high aural directivity of rustling sounds; hence rabbits employ drummings for alarm signals.

The author has a racy style. One may not object to the "timid variety of eel, hiding from the hungry by day", which has "an eye-cell in the tail to advise it when darkness has fallen. . . ."; or to "Male grasshoppers and crickets rub legs and wings together, which seems to please the females much more than their personal appearances", but one must, nevertheless, draw the line at some of his numerous misstatements and half-truths. The ommatidia of compound eyes are not single eyes; the woodlouse has a cuticle or integument, but not a skin; reptiles are not largely colour-blind and, even if they were, their sombre appearance would probably be related more to the colour vision of their predators than of themselves. To a biologist it is surprising, too, to come across any modern book in which the metric system has not been employed, and in which fractions are quoted rather than decimals.

Although he mentions K. Schmidt-Koenig's views regarding bird navigation, Anderson argues convincingly in favour of the bi-coordinate hypothesis of G. V. T. Matthews, despite the fact that this has received little experimental confirmation from other zoologists in recent years. The experimental evidence for and against the alternative points of view is not given. In fact, the first necessitates memory of the whole of the sun's arc at the bird's home; the second – which claims that latitude and longitude are used to establish position – requires the apparent movement of the sun to be extrapolated, but reduces the memory required to a single point. It seems almost inconceivable that a bird should be able to measure changes in the horizontal movement or azimuth of the sun while flying over the ocean when there are no stable points of reference.

Not surprisingly, the best parts of *Animals as Navigators* are those concerned with basic technical principles and their application by animals; for instance, when the figure-of-eight dance of the honey-bee is compared to the "race-track" pattern by which the pilot of a light aircraft returns to the landing strip after overflying an airfield; or when the human eye is considered as an optical instrument: "The lens is so poor we have to cut out the edges by screwing up our eyes if we want to look at anything really small." Anderson makes a good point when he states that the importance of stabilizers in navigation has not been fully appreciated by animal specialists, but the book should have been vetted by a zoologist, to have its biological imperfections corrected. It is an outstanding text none the less.

The scaly sort

Allen Paterson

H. H. DAVIDIAN

The Rhododendron Species: Volume 1, Lepidotes

431pp, with 95 colour photographs, 9 pages of black-and-white photographs and 40 line-drawings. Batsford. £35.
0 7134 1639 4

It is safe to assert that no plant genus has had more effect upon British gardens than the rhododendron and this in spite of the fact that as an inveterate calcifuge, no rhododendron can exist, except as a sickly chlorotic creature, on half the ground in this country. But then few genera are so diverse in form. Its species vary from tall forest trees to tiny alpine shrublets: while most are evergreen with leaves that can be under half an inch or over half a yard in length, one major group, the azaleas, is deciduous and offers as a bonus brilliant autumn colour. Floral display from January to July is often dramatic in a colour range which encompasses everything but the truest of true blue. Scent can be almost as intoxicating as the *Rhododendron Luteum* honey which reportedly sent Xenophon's soldiers mad as they crossed the Pontic Alps. The leaves of some species are so aromatic they can be made into herbal teas.

Absent from Africa and South America, rhododendrons are native to most areas of the world, from the circumpolar Arctic to the rain-forests of Queensland. Their centre of distribution is Western China, from which they seem to spill as from an inexhaustible cornucopia: all the great Himalayan plant collectors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sent back rhododendrons. Though they were not the first rhododendrons to be introduced to Britain, J. D. Hooker's thirty species from Sikkim accelerated the flow, which continued for 150 years from Robert Fortune, E. H. Wilson, Reginald Farrer, Kington-Ward and others. In the course of seven expeditions between 1904 and 1930, George Forrest discovered and introduced 250 distinct species. Perhaps because Himalayan rhododendrons do so well in Scottish gardens, Edinburgh became the studycentre for the genus: in the second decade of this century alone 312 new species were described in the *Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden*.

Revision necessitated by continuing collections from the wild and new taxonomic studies has provided H. H. Davidian with his life's work. This, after forty years, he has now presented to us in part in *The Rhododendron Species*, Volume 1, on the scaly-leaved Lepidotes. Well over 300 species are described and discussed in minute detail and this, with the dichotomous keys, should make it possible for anyone with a bit of background or strong native wit to identify any lepidote species in cultivation.

As a direct successor to the Edinburgh pundits of the first half of the century, Mr Davidian holds rigorously to their classification. He justifies this retention point by point, repeating, "thus (or therefore) we have two large natural divisions of Rhododendrons Lepidote (scaly) Elepidote (non-scaly)". The present reviewer is not up to serious Ericaceous in-fighting but Davidian makes it abundantly clear that he holds no truck with other recent revisions of the genus and the status of the series system. Brickell, Cullen and Chamberlain, the Philipsons and Sleumer all get pretty short shrift. These revisions "are not acceptable in this book, and will not be recognised". Whether the present or posterity is implied is not quite certain.

For humble mortals, without the dozen acres or so once considered obligatory for rhododendrons, Davidian's work still has much to offer. The Lepidotes are generally the smaller species, some of which fill the ecological niche in their Himalayan homes that heather occupies in Britain. Thus many are fine small-garden plants; others, taller but of elegant habit, are the members of the ravishing *Cinnabarinum* series; while still others, such as the incredible *R. dalhousiae*, whose flowers are shaped, sized and scented like some vast trumpet lily, are possible small greenhouse pot-plants. Davidian seldom permits superlatives but gleams of enthusiasm shine through the botanically exact text. Batsford has produced a fine book, though the quality of the ninety-five colour illustrations is uneven. Some are excellent, others are not worth their space. The same criticism applies to the – doubtless historic – sepia-tinted photographs of J. F. Rock. However the forty line-drawings by Helen Jackson and Rodella Purves (unforgivably uncredited in the prefatory list) are superb.

The lowest of the low

Pat Morris

DERYK FRAZER

Reptiles and Amphibians in Britain

256pp. Collins. £11.
0 00 219706 5

For cold-blooded creatures like snakes and lizards, sun-bathing is not just a pleasant pastime but a necessity. Warmth from the sun is crucial to their very existence and it therefore comes as no surprise that cool, cloudy Britain has only six native species of reptiles (snakes and lizards) and a similar number of amphibia (frogs, toads and newts). A few additional species have been introduced from warmer climes, but have mostly given up the struggle and become extinct here. Many people will view this with relief, since reptiles and amphibia are not everyone's favourites; but the paucity of our herpetofauna does make things difficult for an author trying to write an authoritative book about them.

Despite these problems, Deryk Frazer has produced a worthy addition to the long line of "New Naturalist" volumes. His is an interesting, informative and very readable book. There is a lengthy introduction for the non-specialist, covering major aspects of herpetology, from fossils to physiology. For the specialist, there is a 400-item bibliography and, in the intervening 200 pages, comprehensive accounts of the ecology of British species of reptiles and amphibia. There are no digressions, though the style is so concise as to read a little oddly in places; eg, a reference to "warningly coloured insects".

Inevitably one compares Frazer's book with its predecessor in the same series, the late Malcolm Smith's *The British Amphibians and Reptiles*; first published in 1951 and updated (by Frazer himself) through four editions till 1969. The new book has fewer pages, but that is compensated for by smaller typeface. Smith gave us a wealth of personal observations; many of them are usefully repeated by Frazer and supplemented by a wider review of the subject. Apart from being more up to date, Frazer also includes turtles and gives a lot of zoological information absent from the earlier work.

A most interesting and helpful addition to Frazer's book is the detailed section on Conservation and Legislation. This is an area in which he has been active himself both as former President of the British Herpetological Society and a senior officer of the Nature Conservancy Council. He shows clearly how conservation requires very explicit biological information as the basis for active habitat management. I have read few accounts which bring out so well the difference between conservation and mere *protection*. Few British vertebrates are in such dire need of conservation as some of our reptiles and amphibia; notably the sand-lizard, smooth snake and natterjack toad.

The principal omission from this book is a proper consideration of climatic factors. Recent research on reptile energy budgets has shown just how precarious those species are that live at the edge of their geographic range, as in Britain. An overcast June or cool August is a potential catastrophe. Frazer considers at length habitat loss but not "climate loss". Modern research has also shown that temperature can critically affect the sex ratio of reptiles during their embryonic development; again with potentially catastrophic effects. This is not discussed, even though it may have once led to the extinction of whole hordes of dinosaurs.

The book contains sixteen photograph plates (and many drawings). These are only monochrome, but often of considerable interest, particularly one of a toad threatening an inquisitive grass-snake.

Island residents

Bruce Urquhart

DAVID A. BANNERMAN and W. MARY BANNERMAN

The Birds of the Balearics

230pp. Croom Helm. £29.50.
0 7099 0679 X

Donald A. Bannerman, an experienced naturalist known for his twelve volumes on British birds, as well as for books on those of Malta and Cyprus, died while writing *The Birds of the Balearics*, leaving his wife and collaborator, Mary, to finish the first definitive account in English of the bird life of Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera.

In the Balearic Islands rare resident birds are becoming rarer. Sporting guns and bulldozers multiply; racing pigeons and shooting are ever more popular in Spain, so the falcon's egg has a price on it, and even the little Scop's owl is persecuted. Not being on the main migratory routes, the Balearics are particularly vulnerable to depredation; "Come to Ibiza for the Turtle shooting" was a common if misleading slogan on leaflets intended to encourage tourists to arrive in time for the annual massacre of migrating doves. Fortunately the Grupo Ornitologia Balearia, to which this book is dedicated, is increasingly effective in protecting an irreplaceable asset of the islands.

Nineteenth-century ornithological evidence, which includes Von Homeyer's first known record (1861) and that of Lord Lilford (best known for his discovery of the Balearic lizard which bears his name), is believed by Dr Bannerman to be "scientifically negligible" compared to that amassed in the twentieth century. The pioneering German, Von Jordans, collected 1,300 skins as well as eggs and nests for the Museum Koenig in Bonn between 1914 and 1927. Captain Munn, an Englishman who arrived in Mallorca in 1919, published observations during his first eleven years in the Balearics and no less than sixteen of his papers are referred to in Bannerman's bibliography. At times Bannerman finds him unwarrantedly critical of Von Jordans. Another military birdwatcher, the air commander of Mallorca during the 1950s, Colonel José Tato Cumming, evidently became interested in the ecology of the island after completing an aerial survey; he subsequently contributed to ornithological journals and personally flew low over inaccessible mountain peaks in order to identify rare birds such as the Egyptian vulture.

The Bannermans' descriptions of each species are comprehensive and jargon-free; the birds are classified in their scientific orders and families and each species is identified in English, Castilian and Mallorquin. Donald Watson's illustrations, especially his lively line-drawings and sketches, are good; twelve colour plates of his bird paintings reflect strongly the light of the Mediterranean. Each plate has a key on a separate page; but none of the pages is numbered, nor are cross-references provided in the text. Whereas the index of scientific names correctly lists genera alphabetically, providing their species beneath them, in the index of common names one can only find "pelican" under "white" and "thrush" under "rock". To the knowledgeable ornithologist these are small points: though not a field guide, the book is easy to consult and so full of fascinating, well-written research that no amateur should be *discouraged*.

Slipper Orchids: The Art of Digby Graham by Robin Graham and Ronald Roy (109pp. Croom Helm. £25. 0 7099 1126 2) contains thirty-eight full colour plates with accompanying text.

Selection guide

D. F. BRATCHELL

The Impact of Darwinism

140pp. Avebury. £8.
0 86127 204 8.

This is the best available pocket-book guide to evolutionary thought and its effect on emotional life in the nineteenth century. A well-balanced commentary accompanies sensibly chosen long extracts from the most influential works. Erasmus Darwin, Hutton, Playfair, Lyell, Robert Chambers and Darwin himself (a chapter is devoted to *The Origin*) are rightly prominent among the men of science; Kingsley, Tennyson, Clough, Newman, Meredith and Samuel Butler represent the men of letters. An intervening chapter documents the immediate reception of the idea of evolution by natural selection in the literary reviews. Advice on further reading is less than satisfactory, however; J. W. Burrow's introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Origin* and Gavin de Beer's *Charles Darwin* (1963), for instance, have only the unreliable Gertrude Himmelfarb's *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (1959) and Alan Moorehead's voluptuously dressed, scraggily texted *Darwin and the Beagle* (1971) for companionship; and while the literary list includes Susan Chitty's biography of Kingsley, *The Beast and the Monk* (1974), it makes no mention of Lionel Stevenson's *Darwin among the Poets* (1932) or Leo J. Henkin's *Darwinism in the English Novel, 1860–1910* (1940), nor even of Georg Roppen's *Evolution and Poetic Belief: a Study in some Victorian and Modern Writers* (1956).

R.O'H.

The canonical Dean

Richard Wendorf

PAT ROGERS (Editor)

Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems

956pp. Yale University Press. £26 (paperback, Penguin £9.95).
0 300 02966 7

"In the poetical works of Dr Swift", Johnson argued in his *Lives of the English Poets*, "there is not much upon which the critic can exercise his powers". The past decade, however, seems finally to have proved Johnson wrong. Before 1977 there were only two major studies entirely devoted to Swift's verse: F. Elrington Ball's posthumous volume of 1929 (still a useful book) and Maurice Johnson's *The Sin of Wit*, published in 1950. In the past few years, however, the critical tide has begun to run in Swift's favour. We now have full-length books by Nora Crow Jaffe (1977), Peter J. Schakel (1978), John Irwin Fischer (1978), and A. B. England (1980), as well as two collections of essays, one appearing in *Papers on Language & Literature* (1978), the other edited by Fischer and Donald Mell (1980). Separate articles continue to appear at a steady clip, and many of the most distinguished general studies of Swift – especially those by Irvin Ehrenpreis, Claude Rawson, and most recently Carole Fabricant – focus on the poetry as well as the prose. The time is obviously ripe for a new edition of Swift's poetry that will assimilate what these scholars have discovered and provide a new school of readers with full and accurate texts.

The new generation of Swiftians has relied, for the most part, on Sir Harold Williams's pioneering edition of 1937, reissued with revisions in 1958. The major contribution of Williams's elegant three-volume edition in the Oxford English Texts series was its ability to establish a reliable canon of Swift's poems. This was a notoriously difficult task, and it remains one for Swift's editors today. The sheer variety of Swift's modes of publication – and of revision, suppression, and denial of authorship – has no rival in eighteenth-century poetical publishing and, more generally, perhaps finds a serious contender only in Defoe. Williams's edition, now out of print, was followed by Herbert Davis's volume in the Oxford Standard Authors series, which adjusted several of the dates and relied more heavily on revisions in later editions of Swift's verse, especially George Faulkner's collection of 1735.

Pat Rogers's new edition wisely builds upon the work of both Williams and Davis, but nevertheless differs from their collections in several important ways. In keeping with the principles of the Penguin/Yale series, this edition presents a modernized text: in spelling, in the use of capitals and italics, and in the adjustment of punctuation (although here Professor Rogers follows sensible contemporary pointing whenever possible). The result is a handsome, uncluttered, reliable text that will make Swift's poetry more accessible to both the scholar and the general reader than it has ever been before. Textual variants, headnotes, and annotation are sensibly included at the end of the volume, and Rogers's introduction provides a clear and full explanation of his editorial policies – and of the difficulties inherent in his task.

This edition also differs from its predecessors in Rogers's willingness to emend his copy-text with variants drawn from other sources, a procedure he follows "with caution but without extreme puritanical inhibition". Dubious editions, he shows, are occasionally helpful where the copy-text is reticent; and he makes a strong case for the "supplementation" of the "Verses on the Death of Dr Swift" in order to make it thoroughly intelligible. Rogers re-introduces the original titles of all the poems he prints, and reasonably relegates drafts of Swift's poetry to an appendix (the exception is the inclusion of "The Life and Genuine Character of Dr Swift", which he believes represents an unquestionably different poem from Swift's "Verses" on himself). Rogers also makes more cautious use of the variants found in the uncancelled copy of Faulkner's 1735 edition discovered in the English Faculty Library at Oxford: Rogers prudently includes early readings whose revision was dictated "by a kind of auto-censorship, arising from a fear of suppression", but he follows the revised readings in a few places where they appear to represent Swift's changed intentions.

The number of new poems introduced into the canon is rather modest and, perhaps because of this, the discussion of this aspect of the edition is not as clear as it might be. In the introduction, Rogers states that he has included "Swift's ballad on the Westminster election in 1710", but it takes some work to discover that this is the poem entitled "A Dialogue between Captain Tom and Sir Henry Dutton Colt". A related problem emerges in the discussion of poems attributed to Swift. Doubtful attributions are discussed generally in a one-page appendix, without a prolonged examination of poems that have been excluded from this edition. Williams, on the other hand, devoted one hundred pages to these poems and to headnotes assessing their authenticity. A more thorough discussion here would have been useful. Doubtful poems that have been retained in this edition are designated by an asterisk in the table of contents, but no such signal has been included with the texts themselves, nor in the index of titles and first lines, and a casual examination of the poems alone may therefore prove hazardous.

Next to the establishment of the canon of Swift's poems, their dating has remained the most elusive issue for modern editors. The author of the advertisement to the *Poems* of 1735, probably Swift himself, wrote that "Our intentions were to print the poems according to the time they were writ in; but we could not do it so exactly as we desired, because we could never get the least satisfaction in that or many other circumstances from the supposed author." Rogers estimates that he has been able to adjust the dates of roughly 10 per cent of the poems in Williams's edition, and this is a healthy improvement. But even if dates for many of the poems remain relatively soft, it would have been helpful to have had them printed with the texts of the poems as well as in the headnotes at the back of the volume.

Just as questionable, I think, is Rogers's decision to print Swift's own notes to his poems within the annotation rather than beneath the texts. This policy even seems at odds with one of the principles of modernization that governs the edition as a whole: "to provide the reader with the kind of signals he or she would have received as a contemporary of Swift's". Surely these notes constitute an important signal for readers today as well as for Swift's contemporaries; they are certainly more revealing than many of the "unintelligible archaisms in presentation" that Rogers wisely eschews.

The question of modernization is always tricky, and it is possible that some scholars will wish to quote from Williams's old-spelling text while keeping an eye on the variants introduced in Rogers's edition. Rogers assures us, however, that he has not attempted "to turn Swift into an honorary twentieth-century poet, even if that were possible", and his preference for contemporary punctuation is tied to this principle. But even here there are occasional problems, for some of the punctuation retained in this edition works at cross purposes with the modernized spelling, capitalization, and italics. Here is an example from the first stanza of the first poem in this edition, the "Ode to the King":

> *What can the poet's humble praise?*
> *What can the poet's humble bays?*
> *(We poets oft our bays allow,*
> *Translated to the hero's brow)*
> *Add to the victor's happiness?*

Surely the modern reader will find the question marks at the close of these first two lines needlessly interruptive, and perhaps more obtrusive than other quirks introduced by the eighteenth-century printing house. In cases such as this, I would argue for even greater modernization of the text.

Perhaps the most important contributions, however lie in the back matter of Rogers's edition, especially in his judicious headnotes, the annotation, and the biographical dictionary. In a sense these features bear out Joseph Watton's comment that Swift was not a "pure" poet, for they emphasize the intricate biographical contexts in which many of the poems were written. In an essay of 1970 that has frequently been quoted by more recent critics, Maurice Johnson wonders "whether the special quality of Swift's poems may not work through his own biographical presence. . . . As much as for any poet of his day, his own identity and his poetry seem inseparable." Rogers's ample introductions to each poem – as well as his forty-page biographical supplement – should make this presence even more accessible. As Rogers wittily remarks, "in such areas, if this edition does not make a substantial advance on its predecessors, it can only be through massive incompetence on the part of the editor" – and this is surely not the case here.

The nature of Swift's allusions also emerges more clearly in this edition. These allusions have posed a thorny problem in recent critical studies, and it might in fact be argued that this has become as central an issue as the lingering questions about the speaker's voice or Swift's attitudes toward sex. Allusion is the subject of Schakel's study, and is the starting point in Jaffe's book as well. Both of these critics, however, define Swift's use of allusion in a rather narrow way: Schakel argues that Swift was rarely subtle in his allusions, and he therefore focuses on "explicit or repeated allusions, not on references to classical figures or quotations from literary works used in passing as decoration or as a means of expression". And Jaffe, who compares Swift's allusive strategies with Pope's, believes that "Readers who listen to Swift's clues will pass lightly over matters of form and restrict any undisciplined tendency to let allusions burgeon."

The issue is an intricate one, and made all the more murky by Swift's own pronouncement in the "Verses" that "To steal a hint was never known, / But what he writ was all his own", which is itself a borrowing (as Fischer and Rogers point out) from Denham's elegy on Cowley. Rogers's annotation reveals for the first time, however, both the breadth of Swift's allusions and his more traditional devotion to a core of classical and modern authors: Latin poetry, especially Virgil and Ovid; an even division between the old and new books of the Bible; Milton, Butler, and Cowley from the preceding century; and Pope, Gay, and Prior among his contemporaries. Rogers also points out Swift's frequent use of proverbs, the "Irish" rhymes that surface in his later poetry, and what he calls "generic transfers", where diction appropriate to one kind of poetry (the pastoral, for instance) is exploited in the appropriate context of a lampoon or night-piece.

"The verbal texture of Swift's poetry is more dense and richly fraught than was once supposed", Rogers argues; "it is the job of a modern editor to keep up with our new critical awareness, and to give concrete evidence of these poetic resources actually in play." Perhaps it is not hyperbolic to say that Rogers has begun to open up for Swift's poetry the intricately allusive subtexts that Roger Lonsdale revealed in the poetry of Collins and Gray. The profitable attention paid to allusions, quotations, and direct references to other works has been combined with a thorough attempt to cross-reference common images and sentiments within Swift's own poems and to point out significant parallels in his other works, such as the *Polite Conversation*. Rogers also includes an interesting note on rhyme and rhythm, which indicates the relative frequency and length of poems written during different stages in the poet's career.

In a tone appropriate to any careful editor's task – and perhaps especially suitable to the editor of Swift – Rogers notes at the beginning that his edition cannot claim to be either final or definitive. Corroboration of this statement can already be found in the work of other scholars. In separate essays, Aubrey Williams and James Woolley have presented more conclusive evidence that "A Panegyric on the Reverend Dean Swift" (which Rogers prints with an asterisk) was actually written by James Arbuckle. To his credit, however, Rogers's treatment of this poem is characteristically cautious. His headnote contains a clear and concise account of the questions at issue, and his conclusion is far from dogmatic: "In my judgement it is more probable that Arbuckle was the author; but in the absence of decisive evidence to rebut the ascription, the poem is included as a possible item in the authentic canon."

Textual thickets such as these have provoked Rogers to suggest that, even in the wake of Williams's magisterial work, "a well-charted jungle (if such a thing exists) is still a jungle." Like Sir Harold Williams's edition, Pat Rogers's volume represents an admirable attempt to clear yet more ground, especially in its close scrutiny of the contextual undergrowth of Swift's poetry. This edition should ensure that the poet Swift is both read more widely and understood more clearly than he has been so far.

The self-consuming artificer

A. D. Nuttall

BARBARA LEAH HARMAN

Costly Monuments: Representations of the Self in George Herbert's Poetry

225pp. Harvard University Press. £12.25.
0 674 17465 8

At the beginning of George Herbert's *The Temple* stands the Dedication:

> Lord, my first fruits present themselves to thee;
> Yet not mine neither: for from thee they came,
> And must return. Accept of them and me,
> And make us strive, who shall sing best thy name.
> Turn their eyes hither, who shall make a gain:
> Theirs, who shall hurt themselves or me, refrain.

The heading, "Dedication", tells us that the poet is giving his poems to someone and the first word, "Lord", tells us to whom. But then the act of giving, as he embarks upon it, collapses before our eyes. The poems cannot be given to God, because they were in any case always his. The speaker of the poem finds himself excluded and in the fourth line presses for re-admission, with the strange proposal that he be allowed to compete in devotion with the poems themselves. Thus the Dedication, as it unfolds, turns out to be no dedication but rather a prayer. Yet generations of literate readers, if asked "To whom did Herbert dedicate *The Temple*?" would answer, "To God".

Barbara Leah Harman, in her subtle, exciting book, shows how the elimination of the speaker and the collapse of his proffered act of devotion is re-enacted, over and over again, in Herbert's poetry. The "Jordan" poems teach us to despise, not just other kinds of poetry, but the very literary arts on which they, as poems, rely. "The Collar" celebrates a dream of separate, vivid existence and then relinquishes the dream. "The Pilgrimage" seems at first to employ the ancient Christian conception of a significant journey towards God, but then we find that the pilgrim's actions are, once again, pre-empted and nullified by God. Readers will recognize in Ms Harman's "collapsing poems" a version of the "self-consuming artifacts" of Stanley Fish, but there is an important difference. Harman carefully distinguishes what the poem says from what the poem actually does. When people commit *suicide* they cease to exist; when a devotional poem enacts its own peculiar kind of pious suicide, the enactment itself remains. Despite their self-destructive force, the "Jordan" poems are allowed to stand in *The Temple*. Harman suggests that Fish oscillates between a general theory, according to which *all* poems are self-consuming as they burn out in the reader's mind, and the analysis of a theological tradition of human incapacity (and here some poems evidently follow the tradition while others do not). The effect of the distinction is paradoxically to remind us of the strange permanence of poems. Even "collapsing poems" do not really collapse at all. Rather, they "embody disembodiment" and obstinately impress on us the "self" whose dissolution they record.

Harman's "materialist" case against Fish is that he forgets or neglects the sheer fact of the poem. One way of presenting this case might have been to admit Herbert the author to critical discussion alongside Herbert the speaker. Thus in the Dedication Herbert the speaker finds that he cannot give his poems to God, but Herbert the author, who stage-manages the whole operation, nevertheless prints the poem and calls it a Dedication. Herbert the speaker is dissolved but Herbert the author must survive to supervise the dissolution. Inside the fiction God dissolves; outside, the author conducts the entire process. Now if we suppose for a moment that Herbert the author believed the theology expressed within the poems, we have a very odd state of affairs indeed. Harman sticks firmly to the speaker and avoids any talk of the author; this self-imposed restriction to some extent prevents her from noticing certain immense questions, implied by her admirable analysis.

Anglicanism in Herbert's time had consciously reacted against the austerities of Calvin and Luther. Church furnishing and English literary style might properly be "beautified" once more, for the Bible itself was beautiful. Yet the central doctrines of Augustine and Calvin did not die: man is totally depraved and can do nothing of himself. There was some pretence that the two doctrines were compatible, since the first dealt with inessentials, the second with essentials. But in truth the radical theology was always potentially fatal to the less radical. If man is depraved then human poetry is likewise depraved. It is as if Herbert the author is a relatively relaxed Anglican while Herbert the speaker in the poems is often a radical Protestant. Ms Harman says that in "Jordan II" "Christ really interrupts". "Really" is a much abused word. Christ interrupts Herbert the speaker but the interruption was scripted by Herbert the author. Herbert may really have believed that man should repent his own efforts to "improve" the word of God. But what in that case must he have thought of one who turned God's very prerogative to correct such impulses into distinctive (Herbertian) poetry?

Swift's Landscape, by Carole Fabricant, referred to above by Richard Wendorf, has recently been published (318pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £20. 0 8018 2721 3). Professor Fabricant's aim is "to re-construct and explore the significance of . . . Swift's landscape, by which I mean both the actual features of his physical surroundings and the idiosyncratic, highly distinctive way in which he perceived them . . .".

Visibly deranged

George Steiner

THOMAS BERNHARD

Wittgensteins Neffe: Eine Freundschaft

164pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. 3 518 01788 8

Thomas Bernhard's stock-in-trade is loathing. The object of this unrelenting loathing is "Austria". One puts the name in quotation marks because Bernhard's Austria is compounded both of closely observed historical-social reality, and of private fantastications. The Austria of *Verstörung*, of *Das Kalkwerk*, of *Amras*, of *Watten*, of *Midland in Stilfs* and a dozen other short novels and stories, is the very heartland of the inhuman, of the mendacious, of the complacently sadistic and moronic in modern man. It is inhabited by ex-Nazis, only too eager to forget their sometime indiscretions, by oily bourgeois steeped in self-congratulatory philistinism and snobbery of men and women of field and forest, of sodden valleys and fanged mountains who are little better than beasts, but beasts cancerous with human cunning, avarice and cruelty. It is the land of "the cellar", of the homicidally claustrophobic air-raid shelters in Salzburg in which Thomas Bernhard lived out the nightmare of his childhood. It is the ludicrous rump of an empire withering under that hydrocephalic head called "Vienna". Bernhard's Vienna is an empty yet venomous husk, a city which feeds, for purposes of tourism and self-esteem, on the ghosts of those great men whom, in their lifetimes, it execrated, pauperized or simply drove out – Mozart, Mahler, Freud, Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Kokoschka, Kraus and so many more.

Bernhard's fictions and plays turn again and again to the criminal, the child-molester and the assassin (the world of Musil's Moosbrugger, and of the sado-masochistic Austria-Hungary of Musil's young Törless, lies near to hand). The harried, essentially autistic dwellers in the dank forests of Bernhard's Steiermark – the region in which the writer himself has chosen to base his hermetic existence – are mildewed with infirmity, incest and mental retardation. But all these humiliated and damned creatures are infinitely preferable to the physicians who torture them uselessly, to the judges who sentence them, to the social theorists and libertarians who spin fatuous, self-serving hypotheses out of irremediable abjection. No writer since Büchner – another evident predecessor – has caricatured the powers that be with comparable nausea. Psychiatrists, in particular, are depicted time and again as the myopic tormentors of man. In short: there is no need of a transcendent hell: we have "Austria" here and now.

Bernhard established his singular vision and compelling mannerisms right from the start. There is a "Thomas Bernhard geography", a narrative cadence, unmistakable in even the earliest stories and fully organized by the time of the *Kalkwerk* and *Amras*. Dialogue is almost always internalized within the "objective" narration; the effect is simultaneously one of stifled ghostliness and of complete authority. The very long paragraphs of the early fables have expanded into single, seamless blocks (*Wittgensteins Neffe* consists of one paragraph 164 pages long). Bernhard's sentence-structure is lapidary and hammering. The punctuation is a momentary concession or ironic counterpoint to a deliberately exhausting, monomaniacal pressure of voice and meaning. Like Kleist before him, Thomas Bernhard is a master of repetition, of accelerating monotone. This scorner of rhetoric is a formidable rhetorician under whose anaphoric blows the reader crumbles. Taken together, these stylistic enforcements and the obvious integrity of Bernhard's outlook – on the objects of his detestation as well as on the act of writing itself – invited comparison with Kafka. The major Austrian and German literary prizes were duly bestowed. A secondary critical and exegetical literature began to appear. It looked very much as if Bernhard would be the dominant figure in "Central European" fiction and in the further development of German prose.

Disgust, however, is short of breath. There have been in literature virtuosos of hatred, such as Dante, Dostoevsky and Proust. But where hatred is a major dynamism – in Dante's treatment of certain of his adversaries among the damned, in Dostoevsky's polemic against godless meliorism, in Proust's complex self-hatred and representation of "the cities of the plain" – counter-currents of at least equal breadth are generated. A compensatory heaven, a politics of love, a celebration of art, are offered in denial or, at the least, correction of hatred. In Swift and Céline, we can observe how nausea becomes so strident, so all-mastering, that it bends the imagination out of shape. The fiction withers into the pamphlet.

Since the mid-1970s, Bernhard has been repeating, indeed very nearly parodying, himself. The doomed landscapes, the motifs of abjection, the burrows in which first-person narrators go to maddened ground, the rage against a society, a world-order past God's mercy – all these have turned predictable and mechanical. It is as if the trap which Bernhard had constructed for our complacencies and our forgetting had closed on its maker.

Two literary sensibilities of the first rank have been spellbound by the life and style of Wittgenstein: Ingeborg Bachmann and Thomas Bernhard. Both have felt and been able to articulate perceptions of the kind glossed over by the master's Oxbridge acolytes. In several of Bachmann's stories Wittgenstein's essential mysticism, and the pathologies of eros which seem to have generated both his asceticism and the strain in him of unconsciously (?) histrionic violence, are acutely realized. Published in 1975, *Korrektur* is not only Bernhard's masterpiece, and one of the great novels in post-war European literature (at the last count, the American English-language edition had sold a total of some fifty copies), but the most convincing "reading" we have of Wittgenstein's persona. So insistent is Bernhard's insight that we come to experience in "Roithamer" what may well have been the actual proceedings, the motions of spirit, in the early "Austrian", "late-" or "post-Jewish" mathematician-engineer and author of the *Tractatus*.

Wittgenstein's nephew Paul was born in 1907. Closely following the pattern set by his illustrious uncle, he studied mathematics and immersed himself in music. Precisely like Ludwig, Paul Wittgenstein gave away to friends, chance acquaintances and the needy his ample share of the family fortune. Starting from his thirty-fifth year, Paul suffered nervous breakdowns of deepening severity. Abandoned by almost his entire family and sometime circle, reduced to economic *misère*, he alternated between spells in psychiatric wards and marginal survival in Vienna. Bernhard met Paul when he himself lay convalescing in a sanatorium after an appalling operation for the removal of a tumour in his chest (an operation from which he had hardly been expected to recover). Bernhard lay in the pavilion of the moribund; Paul in that of the deranged. The shadow of death met that of madness in the no-man's land between the two wings of the hospital. Bernhard found in Wittgenstein's nephew one of the very few human beings whose estrangement from "Austria", whose fastidious addiction to verity, whose mental and physical pains could match and answer to his own.

This autobiographical memoir recounts the progress of their reciprocal trust and Paul Wittgenstein's last years. Over and over, *Wittgensteins Neffe* argues a calm paradox: there are decisive levels on which we must learn to think of Ludwig and of Paul as interchangeable. Ludwig's outward behaviour was frequently as bizarre, as "deranged" (in the eyes of common-sense mundanity) as was Paul's. Luck would have it that a Cambridge fellowship rescued Ludwig from the menace of "mental treatment" or a life of rural isolation, whereas Paul was delivered into the sadistic and moronic "care" of the psychiatrists. Ludwig articulated his "philosophy", if it is that, as it were in spite of himself. Each of his rare publications was an agonizing compromise with a fundamental strategy of abstention, of "non-saying". In this perspective, suggests Bernhard, Paul Wittgenstein was, very possibly the "greater" of the two. He would not complete the book which he began, though there was magic in it. He would not entrust to paper or the betrayals of common discourse the truths which he had come upon. His terrible infirmities were the necessary and sufficient proofs of his apprehensions. Hence Bernhard's central chiasmus:

> The one, Ludwig, was *perhaps* more philosophical; the other, Paul, was *perhaps* crazier. But it may be that we only believe the one Wittgenstein to have been a philosopher because he made public his philosophy and not his derangement, whereas we believe the other, Paul, to have been mad only because he suppressed and did not publish his philosophy but made visible his derangement.

There are inspired pages in this memoir. Bernhard communicates Paul Wittgenstein's elusive charm, the scrupulous elegance of his manners even in destitution. He makes us feel directly the deep relations to music in Paul's thought and being. There are oases in the narrative: a wonderfully ludicrous peregrination across much of Austria in pursuit of *The Times* and *Le Monde*, there being no Austrian newspaper which would leave unsullied or undemeaned the mind and soul of a free humanist. The coffee-houses of Vienna are poignantly evoked.

But Bernhard's obsessions are again virulent. Doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists are a pack out of hell. Middle-class society and culture are ordure. To be awarded a paramount literary prize by the Austrian government, to accept this prize in a public ceremony in Vienna (here Bernhard's account is rigorously autobiographical) is to solace, to flatter those hypocritical fools who, in actual fact, despise serious work and merely seek to "make it harmless" by virtue of official recognition. The "madness" of a Paul Wittgenstein is sanity and holiness when it is compared to the rationality of twentieth-century society. Paul's refusal to treat money as meaningful is the sole logical rejection of the abjections of capitalism and "Austrian" materialism. In its detestation of intellectual and ethical fakes out on Paul – who is helpless and in Vienna – the (secret) loathing is harbours for Ludwig and his posthumous glory.

At the close of this monody, the reader cries out for air. This, of course, is Thomas Bernhard's intention. But the fulfilment of this strategy is also destructive of a great writer. Just how great is shown, once again, by the momentary shafts of light and loving intimacy in this accusing epitaph.

Less than coherent

T. J. Reed

DOROTHY JAMES

George Büchner's 'Dantons Tod': A Reappraisal

138pp. Modern Humanities Research Association. £13.50.

Dantons Tod is a classic of the German theatre (the recent fine National Theatre production will have given English audiences some idea why); and as the earthy, often obscene, broodingly pessimistic and in every way provocative work of a doomed young man, it is a quintessentially "modern" literary classic too. But classics, even when as unsettling as this one, eventually generate a kind of piety which leads to decreased critical attentiveness. Interpretative thought flows in set channels, or stagnates altogether.

Dorothy James's book is calculated to stir the stagnant waters. Against critics who seize on a single line in the play – political commitment or political disillusion, an obsession with history or a turning away from its problems into "existential" privacy – she takes on the play's full range of contrasting, even contradictory, elements and opens up questions which had been regarded as closed in each of these areas. Where the "single-line" interpretations necessarily neglect the play's discontinuities, she ends up querying the very coherence of the text itself and the integrity of the main characters.

That may sound merely destructive. It certainly destroys some standard assumptions: above all, the assumption that Büchner's realism is unquestionable because it derives from historical sources faithfully followed. There have been numerous source-studies of *Dantons Tod*, but they prove to have been faulty in their basic method. Working from the literary text, it was easy enough to document an extensive use of source-materials which seemed to imply an authentic picture. But when the enquiry begins the other way on, from the total picture (or pictures) available in the sources, it emerges how piecemeal and selective Büchner's method of composition was as he arranged his historical mosaic, and how extensively historical sayings and ideas were given an emphasis and import all his own. For example, Robespierre's "virtue" becomes exclusively sexual in meaning, which allows Büchner to set up a temperamental conflict with the (equally unhistorical) active libertinism of Danton's last days.

This kind of thing is hardly a surprise, given what we know about writers generally and their way with history. But piety has always taken Büchner, on his own word, as the one dramatist fiercely faithful to his sources – forgetting that his claim is made in a letter to his shocked parents defending the language of his revolutionary bandits as no worse than it should be. That greatly moderates Büchner's Ranke-like pretension to come as close as possible to "history as it really happened". And even if that were taken at face value, it is remarkable how few critics have asked, with Ronald Peacock, how a historically authentic Danton could also be the gloomy philosophizer we see, one moment lethargically musing on the pointlessness of human existence, the next (in obedience to the historical record) violently exerting himself to save his life before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Fewer still have asked the further question of how the complex of ideas which the play evidently strains to convey affects the credibility of the characters who are given the task of voicing them: let alone the still larger question of how coherent that complex of ideas is in its compounded as it is of historical pessimism, ethical naturalism, physiological determinism, atheistic vehemence, humanist protest and an often almost Christian conscience. Dr James gives all these factors full weight and sometimes (as with Büchner's scientific knowledge) a fuller background than we have previously had. At point after point of the text, she shows how the inner tensions of this idea-complex disturb the dramatic argument in ways we had failed or forgotten to notice.

Her conclusion is that Büchner is, above all, working out his urgent concerns, personal and general, through the medium of his first drama. The "distinct strands of thought cannot be run together without contradiction", the ideas "overwhelm" the characters and Büchner eventually gives up the attempt to create wholly coherent dramatic figures. She sees *Dantons Tod* as essentially the first draft – powerful, vital, but imperfect – of a work the author never had a chance to revise.

Some will reject this account simply because it is genetic, and damaging to a classic. But that would be to brush uncomfortably acute argument under the carpet. This is good genetic criticism of a kind that should be listened to: it does not set out from the first to unpick a finished work of art, but honestly tries to make it cohere in the reading. Only when this will not work does it explain the failure by a realistic and informed account of the elements with which the dramatist was struggling. Even those who do not agree that Danton is an incoherent figure will recognize more clearly than before that there is a problem, and must certainly see that the old trick of accepting a character as coherent *because* he is inconsistent ("how human . . .") is a feeble evasion; for unless we have a target of coherence for the dramatist to hit or miss, our praise means as little as our blame.

Finally, this is good genetic criticism because it does not leave us simply with inert and useless pieces in our hands where before we had a play. It reconstitutes our awareness of the nature and difficulties of historical drama. It makes the reading of Büchner's text again a fresh and challenging enterprise. And it does so without for a moment patronizing the young writer in his twenty-second and penultimate year. Indeed, far more than most accounts with their ritual "if only he had lived longer", it gives a vivid sense of the wealth of ideas and impulses at work in him, and of the productive potential of the friction between them which had already begun.

Zivilcourageous

Colin Russ

HELGA SCHUBERT

Das Verbotene Zimmer

159pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. 3 472 86556 3

Although this collection of nineteen prose texts is subtitled "Geschichten", it belongs for practical purposes to the field of autobiography. For it represents an eye-witness account of what it has been like for the author to grow up and make her way as a writer in the German Democratic Republic, a country in which most of these pieces have not been published. Born in Berlin in 1940, Helga Schubert belonged to an age group who, as she observes, did not have to follow their immediate predecessors in starting each school lesson with a dutiful "Heil Hitler". Images and scenes of the East German society which has evolved in step with her own life are equally sardonic and historically aware: the ruling party is also the "Kommentator" of its citizens' thoughts, not a single self-confessed former Nazi is to be found, and writers are liable to get invited in a group to an unmemorable lunch with a so-called "highly placed person".

The author's expeditions to the "forbidden room" of West Berlin and to the Soviet Union furnish the material for some of the most interesting passages in the book. West Berlin, surfeited with newspapers and consumer oriented, appears to the visitor as both commercialized and intriguing (even the car fumes are more agreeable than back East). In the dramatically opposed world of Moscow, the author meets the elderly Ulanova, thirty years older than she and the mentor of young dancers – a touching double illustration of the interaction of generations which is a recurring theme in the book.

Helga Schubert's personal life has been overshadowed by sadness and illness. Her autobiographical texts show her confronting private griefs with the same steadfastness that a writer of her integrity living in the German Democratic Republic may feel it necessary to display in public: a kind of "Zivilcourage" to which the collection and its appearance bear ressively testify.

Dynasts of Saxony

F. R. H. Du Boulay

K. J. LEYSER

Medieval Germany and its Neighbours 900–1250

288pp. Hambledon Press, 35 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1. £18. 0 907628 08 7

Three years after the appearance of his brilliant study of Ottonian Saxony, K. J. Leyser presents us with another volume which revolves about the same theme. This is not the sustained sequel we hoped for but a collection of articles and essays published over the past two decades, together with two reflective lectures not hitherto printed in full.

The problem of collecting papers is always to impose a unified direction of thought. With disarming modesty Mr Leyser remarks of the pieces here collected, "there is, to my astonishment, a certain thematic consistency and coherence about them."

He is right in two ways. The first is stylistic. Although the essays were written for different kinds of audience, from the exacting scrutineers of learned journals to the civilized generalists of Radio 3, the prose keeps its even, clear flow. Leyser does not talk up or down. His details and annotated work always add speculative stimulus, while his more "popular" lectures spring from a learning which is sensed but not paraded.

The second source of coherence is that these papers are rooted in Leyser's chosen heartland of Saxony. This is, of course, before the fragmentations of the later medieval period made "Saxony" multiple and mobile. Leyser's Saxony is the stem-land of a dynasty which began in the tenth century to rule and order much of the north German plain. The book glances further afield, to Byzantium and to England, to make comparisons and connections, but always returns to base.

Three of the papers are of outstanding importance: on Henry I (*d 936*) and the beginning of the Saxon "empire"; on Ottonian government (tenth century); and on the German aristocracy from the ninth to the early twelfth century. In these papers Leyser explains Saxon military dominance, which was celebrated with exultation by Widukind, a tenth-century monk of Corvey on the upper Weser, but is here examined more deeply by Leyser himself from the documents of Corvey and other centres. A hundred years before Widukind, Saxon military standing had not been high. Good horses were scarce, and the combat skills of the Franks had not yet been matched on the Elbe. But times were changing rapidly. It is of absorbing interest that similar changes were occurring in the tenth and early eleventh century elsewhere too in northern Europe. The land began to be ruled by families which can be traced from generation to generation and identified by their place of residence and their tenure of the high offices of count and duke. Before that date historians cannot trace dynastic continuity because the structure of families was different, not because the sources are poorer. Aristocracies had been made up of very large family groups, amorphous but conscious of nobility deriving from ancestors who might be either male or female. Only later, from the tenth century, did the enforcement of a more masculine, primogeniture succession bring into being the dynasty, named after its castle(s) and endowed from father to son with the same patrimonial lordships. Recently, the same development has been described by Andrew Lewis for early Capetian France and by David Bate for Normandy before its conquest of England.

The consequences of such family changes were far-reaching, and they were in the exact sense political, as they were intended to be. Readers should not start back in disgust with cries of "*Annalisme*", for this is the stuff of political history. In the first place, vast regions ("stem-duchies", *regna*) could be held together by dynasts journeying from place to place. Treasure and rents could be collected from subject-peoples and used to maintain and train warriors in their garrisons. Palaces and cathedrals could be built to receive the kings, and large church estates created to perpetuate land in the ruling families' possession. True, these could be plundered, even by the king, to fund the improvement and drive of Saxon armies. But in these ways a new, royal, noble, aggressive and landed society was created.

As the reality sinks home, the historian may begin to understand better the reforming papacy of the eleventh century, the "overwhelming sense of mission, and frightening severity" of the little revolutionary who became Pope Gregory VII, and to see why he insisted that the church, lands and all, was not simply the private possession of Teutonic aristocrats. Leyser discusses this too, in a paper on "The polemics of papal revolution". He suggests that Gregory VII never thought out a rounded theory of secular government and drew distinctions between good and evil rulers rather than dwelt abstractly upon the nature of authority.

Three slighter essays move us on into the twelfth century, but they give a good opportunity to watch the commingling of old and new at that period of even swifter transformation. Most seemed then to be living in two worlds at once. The first was the older, hieratic one of relics and touchings, which focused the worship of nobleman and peasant alike. Leyser observes that the collection and cultus of relics played a part both in converting the Saxons from their tenacious heathenism and in attracting the Ottonian kings to Rome, where so great a wealth of relics was to be had. Another side of this more primitive Christianity was its physical violence. In 1107 the margrave Otakar of Styria wanted to form a Benedictine monastery out of a clerical institution he possessed. Some of the clerks were his serfs, and he forced them to become monks. "You are mine and so you must agree with me and obey my will in everything". Consent was gained by beating. (Students of later medieval Germany might add that this current of violence did not disappear. Provincial councils took note that lords in their castles might compel their chaplains with the whip, even in matters of the confessional.)

On the other hand, the twelfth century, with its growing literacy and openness to southern literatures, saw a new individualism which included a taste for the anecdote, scurrilous as well as moral. The devil was no longer allowed the best jokes, and even kings were sometimes viewed with a cynical eye. Nor was this confined to relatively secure France, where Louis VII was reported as saying "here we have only bread, wine and joy". The German, too, in the person of Barbarossa, was shown securing the enjoyment of territory (the Mathildine lands in Tuscany) by great duplicity. The tale comes from Romuald of Salerno, and it is a very different thing from the transcendental reverence of Carolingians like Einhard.

Mr Leyser looks forward to "the continuous and balanced history" of this period which is so badly needed. We can only echo his plea and hope he will answer it himself.

Textual communities

Marjorie Chibnall

BRIAN STOCK

The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

604pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £38.80. 0 691 05368 5

In an inaugural lecture delivered half a century ago, Eileen Power referred to the need, to which anthropologists, sociologists, economists and historians were all alive, for an integration of their labours, based upon a comprehension of each other's objects, capacities and methods. While historians certainly worked more closely with economists in the past fifty years, many of them are still a very long way from integrating their studies with those of the other two disciplines. The exclusiveness has not been one-sided; many theorists in the social sciences have been equally determined to go their own ways. So a detailed, scholarly study of the implications of literacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which makes use of various inter-disciplinary techniques and offers a positive assertion of the importance of historical research in interpretative science, will be valuable to readers with a wide range of interests, as well as being important in itself.

Literacy and oral tradition, learned and popular culture, lay and clerical piety, are all subjects that have commanded increasing attention in recent years. They have, indeed, a contemporary interest. Brian Stock is not directly concerned either with discovering the roots of modern literacy, or with tracing the sources of oral and written culture in the period under review. His interest is in studying how the elements in these cultures interacted on one another and in reconstituting another society's system of communication on its own terms. But he does attempt to explain this in terms likely to be intelligible to a wider spectrum of twentieth-century readers than just those with a detailed knowledge of the classical tradition in the Middle Ages, and in the philosophical chapters he picks up the themes that modern linguistic philosophers have found particularly interesting in the debates between Berengar and Lanfranc or Anselm and Gaunilo.

The result is illuminating and not at all anachronistic. Medieval thinkers, who had inherited certain philosophical assumptions in the works of the Fathers and only the elementary tools for explaining them in the logical and grammatical treatises of antiquity, had a difficult task in attempting to build up tentative systems of philosophy and theology. Even though, as Stock stresses, finding out about the world was to some of them "tantamount to reconstructing Plato's inner meaning", the problems were approached in many individual ways. One important aspect of learned thought in this period is the variety of solutions offered. The interactions of these new and often conflicting ideas on society have an interest that would be lost by a linear interpretation of a traditional kind, chiefly concerned with tracing the dominant trends of thought.

In examining the range, depth and permanence of literacy, Stock uses the techniques of both historians and social scientists. His interpretation of historical sources gives a central place to "texts", conceived in a particular way. They do not exactly correspond to any type of document; to be valid they require logically coherent reasoning. A text can, in origin, be structured discourse, spoken aloud. In some literate groups it may be so familiar and accepted that a written text is superfluous; but disagreement or misunderstanding makes writing indispensable. In this interpretation the Rule of St Benedict can be regarded as a text; likewise the whole Bible or a part of it; likewise a treatise such as Anselm's *Monologion*, which began in his mind as a "mental text" and ultimately gave rise to a written one. The contrast between Lanfranc and Berengar is essentially that Lanfranc would limit the function of philosophy "to the explication" of a given text in accord with traditional teaching"; Berengar saw a role "for new interpretations as independent texts".

If this concept is applied to symbol and ritual, a distinction can be made between primitive, oral ritualism and the rational, interpretative approach of some eleventh and twelfth-century writes to the same rites and symbols. Again, if texts are examined in their social context, the various groups, including heretical groups, that were held together by their use of particular texts "both to structure the internal behaviour of the groups' members and to provide solidarity against the outside world" can be categorized as "textual communities". Investigating the history of some of these communities illustrates the ways in which, even when literacy was confined to a very small proportion of the population, literate, illiterate and semi-literate persons and groups could influence and be influenced by each other so as to generate social change.

Stock discusses a wide range of interrelated topics: heresy, reform, linguistic philosophy, mystical theology, the social uses of ideas, interpretations of history. In so ambitious a scheme it is only to be expected that individual readers may find some statements with which they will wish to take issue. How truly, for instance, can it be asserted that "by the mid-twelfth century monarchy centred upon written law took the place of the legitimation of royal authority through sacral rites"? Is it true to say of feudalism that a complex set of human relations was so completely "reduced to a body of normative legislation . . . that the feudist lawyers of the seventeenth century had no trouble in reconstructing the entire organism from its surviving legal remains", when it might be argued that three hundred years have not yet been long enough to clear away all the misconceptions generated by those lawyers in interpreting the fossilized remains of feudal institutions? Again, it might be objected that the symbolism is sometimes oversimplified. The vision of souls undergoing purgatorial punishment, described by Walchelin, the parish priest of Saint-Aubin de Bonneval, is said by Stock to have taken place in "the unsettled wilderness of Maine, which often doubles for the Mediterranean retreats of the desert fathers"; yet in fact the priest was returning from visiting a sick parishioner in his own Norman village near Orbec.

Nevertheless, symbols are usually employed successfully to make the social structure and mental outlook of the age more intelligible. This is a carefully researched, constructive and challenging book, whose value far outweighs any minor cavils or criticisms. It may provoke disagreement no less than agreement; it will certainly provoke thought.

Evidence of conquest

H. R. Loyn

TREVOR ROWLEY

The Norman Heritage 1066–1200

210pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £9.95. 0 7100 9413 2

Trevor Rowley's book is the first in a series which aims to treat the broad theme of man's interaction with his environment in Britain, a full order but a task well worth undertaking. The author's training as a geographer and archaeologist serves him well and a good scatter of visual material, some of it familiar other not so familiar, holds the attention, while maps, plans and aerial photographs enliven the text.

The substance of the book comes in six compact chapters on castles, the landscape, towns, the church, forests, parks and woodland, and the Welsh and the border. A rather thin historical introduction and a concluding short survey of the heritage serve to hold the more substantial essays in place. Mr Rowley keeps to his brief but is conscious also of the questions likely to be asked by traditional historians.

There is much of interest here, presented from an unusual angle, for those concerned with the two central problems of early Norman social history: that is, how to assess the strength of the Anglo-Saxon heritage and how to draw the perilous balance between attributing too much or too little to the Normans. It is only too easy to praise or blame the Normans especially for change that was in fact common to the whole fabric of Western European civilization in the dynamic and dramatic age of the Investiture Contest. The most arresting sentence in Rowley's book occurs on page 7, where he argues that the strict answer must be no to the question "would the archaeologist recognise the Norman Conquest in the absence of documentary evidence?". This negative answer is a bit *too* strict for my liking (as indeed for Rowley himself) but the possibility is worth pondering. The Norman period is very well documented, and we need to reflect on the nature of the relationship of tangible remains to the literary record if we are to do more than pay lip-service to the work of the archaeologist. Evidence from church building (small churches as well as great), from castles – mottes and their baileys, as well as monsters like the Tower or Colchester – and perhaps above all from modifications that are peculiarly Anglo-Norman in Romanesque sculpture and illuminated manuscripts, might well lead the clever archaeologist to posit a French conquest and maybe specifically a Norman one, even without literary support.

Rowley is alert to the elements of colonization in the Norman settlement and pays proper attention to urbanization as part of Norman strategy to control newly conquered territory. He has good things to say on the shape and development of castle boroughs and on the relationship of defence to trade. The chapter on forests and parklands gives full prominence to an aspect of Norman government that we neglect at our peril. The extent of forest, far exceeding of course the extent of woodland, and the concern of later generations when the Charter of the Forest becomes intimately connected with Magna Carta, are intelligible only when we appreciate the weight of dominical lordship involved in afforestation and its legal consequences. Energy, industry, concentration of wealth and willingness to use it emerges as the great Norman attributes and they shine through the literary. One welcomes the quotation here from St Bernard of Clairvaux (*not* incidentally the founder of the Cistercian Order) who, reflecting on the magnificence of the great Romanesque churches, pleaded "for God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies why at least do they not shrink from the expense?" Some attention is paid to Wales but little to Scotland or Ireland. The full British dimension would demand another volume at least. The one memorable date, 1066 itself, will need some attention on the title-page in a reprint.

The ethical backslash

Valentine Cunningham

Frank Kermode
Essays on Fiction 1971–82
227pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £9.95 (paperback, £5.95). 0 7100 9442 6

Martin Price
Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel
373pp. Yale University Press. £22.50. 0 300 02867 9

Everyone knows there's a critical war on. In a sense there's never been a critical peace on. And not surprisingly, feelings are mixed. In their differing ways neither Frank Kermode nor Martin Price is happy. They're not alone.

Martin Price gives us only a general, somewhat sketchy sense of where the enemy is positioned. Not so Frank Kermode. He fine-tunes literary history. The minutiae of the immediate critical past obsess him, as they obsess many of the people he's sceptical about – the jostlers for the supremacy of *primogeniture, the power that comes from being first*. Kermode carefully dates his essays (mostly lectures, in fact). He well knows that no accusation is nowadays more telling that that of datedness. Last year's idea from Paris, last month's word from Derrida, are of course by now terrifically old hat. Everyone who knows has just nipped craftily on to this week's novelty leaving last week's fuddy-duddy stuff far behind. Even taking this into account, it's rather daunting to have Kermode say he felt dismally that *The Sense of An Ending* was "antediluvian almost on publication". Still, such *sharponed senses for history* do help him mightily as war historian. This latest war broke out, Kermode declares, exactly in 1967, when Barthes's influence took hold and Derrida burst on to the stage. The new paideia is also the new catastrophism – neo-Dada – that flourished in 1968. The theories of post-structuralism offend Kermode's sense of history and so he seeks to handle them with the precisions of historical acumen thus displayed. They also offend his sense of morality. The argument that critics have ethical responsibility is the main strand that joins Kermode's forces with Price's (*and with the tradition of F.R. Leavis* and, in his way, E.D. Hirsch).

History and morality make powerful weapons. Nowhere in this collection, however, is Kermode very precise *about where the amorality, let alone immorality*, of the new criticism really resides. Nor, it turns out, is Price: he aims a few swipes at critics who sneer at the necessity of the moral life, who don't appreciate the value of bearing moral witness or making moral decisions, who would fragment the self into a set of mere positions lacking the continuity that the moral life depends on. And after that he just gets on massively, even magisterially, with the well-established task of reading novels by the great classic novelists on the old syllabus (Austen, Dickens, Eliot, Stendhal, Tolstoy, James, Conrad, Lawrence, and so on) as powerful ethical mirrors and ethical instruments. He is certain, and acts on the certainty, that novels have authors, who are men and women with high moral concerns (not to mention volumes of collected essays and letters to trawl about in for extra-fictional opinions about life). He knows that novels are built of words, and that words have referents ("we could not read at all if we did not read *through* words", "to say that words refer only to other words produces a startling effect of unreality"); knows too that novels are full of people who are just like people out here in the world and so are to be discussed as we discuss ourselves. He's attracted to the thinginess of things, the thereness of the world, the glorious under-determined contingency of human life, all of which he believes are of the essence of great fiction. These are what Tolstoy stands for, and what Lionel Trilling said Jane Murdoch find in that idea and practice of the novel that has Tolstoy at its centre. It is the 'ordinariness' of ordinary-language-man that Wittgenstein and Oxford Philosophy (rade in. Price's points of reference are precisely such philosophers. He is superb on Wittgenstein on Tolstoy, suggestive about similarities between James's dialogues and Plato's, warms to the thoughts of Murdoch and P. F. Strawson, Richard Wollheim and H.L.A. Hart, as they can be applied to fiction. He says he wants no truck with "suspicious" criticism, Nietzschean, *Freudian, Marxist. Nowhere does he* mention a single critical opinion offered by the so-called Yale School. Hartman, Bloom, Hillis Miller and de Man might never have written a word for all the attention they get from Price. It's about as hefty a rebuke as the Yale School could get from within Yale's own English department. Price is Sterling Professor of English at Yale. In his volume, the Other Yale School speaks up – well – in a rather sterling way.

Forms of Life would do very well, in fact, as the normative case that, Kermode (properly) argues, initiates, beginning readers and younger students, need in order to measure more suspicious readings by. It is just such a reading of texts as plenitudinous, as affairs of present meaning, of the *lisible*, that the deconstructionist project kicks off from in its quest for absence, aporia, the *scriptible*, self-undoing, but fails to give much account of as it proceeds on its *own more negative way. For his own* part, Kermode's preferred ambition is to work as a double agent of interpretation, aware of the procedures and languages of suspicious criticism, but refusing to abandon the discourse of the simple reader, of the traditional expectation. He occasionally sounds a bit worn-out with the job of holding this middle ("too old . . . by formation too much of a historian . . . a diachronic sort of person"). The strain of keeping up with what's new and at the same time hooking it continually back on to what's less new does show. You can easily feel that much labour has gone into some not altogether worthy compromises with the latest thing. (I take it, for example, that Kermode's energetic efforts in the early 1970s at talking like Barthes about possible lexicons, *grammars*, syntax of the novel in and around 1907, or at analysing novels in terms of oppositions and inversions of relationship such as Lévi-Strauss used in analysing myths, did not lead him very far in the poetics of the novel.) And of course no side – especially, it would seem, in Cambridge, England – is ever particularly grateful to the middle man.

What Kermode precisely deserves gratitude for, though, is showing ways through the most difficult critical impasses. On the one side he continues to speak with historical confidence. Readers and readings are for him always historical affairs (he pushes Gadamer's historicism). Mere *anti-passéisme*, pure Saussurean synchrony, have, he believes, had their day and *historical knowledge helps* knock the shine off many a "new" position Knowing your critical history grants the wisdoms of perspective. So, Kermode argues, epistemologically sceptical theorizing is only now catching up with the "researches" of the novelists, especially of James and Conrad. Clara Reeve anticipated Wolfgang Iser, James and Conrad gloried in their gaps long before Barthes came along. How is it Kermode argues, that the logocentric ages also provided texts that undid logocentrism? What about the narrative arbitrariness, the indeterminate retreats and refusals, the *short-way* with narrative convenience occurring as long ago as Chrétien de Troyes or the Biblical Gospels?

On the other side, E.M. Forster's simple-minded Uncle Willie gets little comforting either. Texts are always full of secrets and opacities, traps for the simple expectation. The good ones are always half-occulted, mutinous, their deceptive manifestness covering multitudes of more interesting latencies. Freud's idea of how the dream-work is conducted remains fundamental. The open-determinedness of novels is their great entitlement to interpretation. And hermeneutics (oddly, not specifically disavowed by Martin Price) are not only desirable but inevitable if one is to be true to the nature of this writing. Writing *starts* in interpretation (as texts as widely dispersed in time as James's novels and the Christian Gospels illustrate). Any authoritative claim on a single correct reading that the writer might be thought to "own", and thus any attempt to constrain the liberty of interpreting, collapses immediately as *the writer him- or herself engages in* primary acts of self-reading. In Kermode's marvellous phrase, writers "poach their own game." Over-determination is indeterminacy. It demands over-interpretation; that is, it multiplies possible reading. Interpretation never stops. Even common sense and ordinary experience, as Kermode delights in reminding our anxiously theorizing epoch, will tell us so.

Kermode's rebuke to post-structuralism – his telling defence of historical connections, his strong case that dividing the *lisible* from the *scriptible*, readerly "consumption" from readerly "production" is impossible – is attractive enough. His parallel delve into the margins and opacities of fiction, into the bits of texts that Uncle Willie and his ilk want to sterilize, screen out, or simply ignore, into the kind of revelatory, self-interpreting and self-foiling zones of texts that deconstructionists are always *eager to home in on*, is *more* compelling still. Price evinces the fear that acceptance of everything, every figure, every action, every event, in a novel as relevant to meaning is a form of paranoia. Kermode takes on at least the possibility of this vertiginous prospect. He offers, for instance, a tremendously strong reading of the occult and occulted, the ghostly, seen-unseenness in *Under Western Eyes* that one wants continually to set beside Price's consistent refusal to consider the self-referring, meta-textual activities, the more attractively odd episodes of the novels he writes about. It's only apt that the very example Price chooses from *Bleak House* to illustrate the obvious irrelevance of at least some things in the dense text of the novel (the occurence of Miss M. Melvilleson, the professional celebrity performer at the Sol's Arms: "no conceivable relation to Dickens's plot") should in fact be jammed full of relevance. In that seemingly casual appearance there is disguised motherhood, a mother who appears under an assumed name, *whose public* appearances clash with the claims of her private life as mother of a small baby, who is doing socially offending things rather than accept being poor *and honest* and "selling lucifers". This mother is a pastiche of Lady Dedlock. But here too is a discreet but compelling declaration against our too easily regarding anything written in a novel as ignorable, as a simple transparence: Miss Melvilleson had "a space to herself in the manuscript announcement in the window", which is a writing that won't allow you just to look unnoticeably through it, her name, her, as if she were a translucent nothing.

Kermode wouldn't, one feels sure, have dismissed such a startling moment as irrelevant. The importance of his stance is precisely that it urges those of the Price persuasion – clever, well-read, but self-narrowing Uncle Willies – to couple their laudable ethical concerns with textual ones. What Kermode's liberal extension of meaning-fulness will not do, however, is settle the question whether anything at all is actually irrelevant in a text. Are there to be no mere contingencies in novels – just as Freud disallowed the contingent from interpretations of dreams? Certainly the potential messiness of interpretation is revealed very clearly in the debate with P.D. Juhl over his book *Interpretation* with which Kermode's book ends. Juhl's set of interpretations of interpreters interpreting is, according to its author, misinterpreted by Kermode's review of it; Kermode ripostes that his interpretations have been misinterpreted by the first interpreter. Interpreting interpreting: it sounds more like a cry for help than a description of a happy activity. Clearly our efforts to "disambiguate" texts can themselves prove disconcertingly ambiguous, even if they're not all actually as undisambiguable as Kermode believes (in the teeth of Juhl's doubts) *Hamlet* to be.

But – and it's the oldest question – who adjudicates in these messy circumstances? Kermode's answer (in "Can We Say Absolutely Anything We Like?") is: the Institution.

Price believes, perceptively, that the novel (and "character") are "institutions", with their own systems of in-built controls. Kermode, ideologically touchier and sharper, looks to the Institution controlling our approaches to these textual institutions. This notion is part of Kermode's very persuasive ideological account of our modern reading ways. The Biblical Big Book gives way to the secularized text, and canonical controls pass to the University. And, on the whole, Kermode professes to believe that the benefits of institutional control outweigh the slight loss of freedom entailed. For the Institution, says Kermode, guarantees necessary continuities of canon and interpretation and does important sanitary work by "recuperating" the salvable judgment and "nihilating" the silly or wrong one. "It is", writes Kermode in "The Institutional Control of Interpretation", "by recognising the tacit authority of the institution that we achieve the measure of liberty we have in interpreting". Such is the faith of Institutional Man, apparently believing that the profession of criticism can be relied on to spot the junky and the daft, and, *further, to try and get rid of* such. Kermode's dyspeptic reading of currently influential readers shows that he doesn't entirely trust in the University's judgment. Nor should he. As for the idea that the Institution always opens its doors to the best readers, and that only the junk reading and the daft reader will fail to find institutional homes within the pale of respectability: we don't only have to think of the current reality in which hundreds of superb critics have no hope of finding employment within the University, nor only meditate on the way many much less good interpreters are securely ensconced *there; we can* also dwell thoughtfully on the whole history of the English Faculty at Cambridge to which Professor Kermode until recently belonged, a history of *astounding* institutional errors of choice among readings and reading personnel.

To re-make the frame

David Coward

Inez Hedges
Languages of Revolt: Dada and surrealist literature and film
166pp. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. $25. 0 8223 0493 7

The practice of judging art by recourse to external authority is ancient and respectable. Now that criticism is well on the way to becoming, as Anatole France predicted, mightier than art, the number of external authorities that may legitimately be called on grows hourly. Of late, as the author of this stimulating and ambitious study points out, work in the social and human sciences has given rise to pure theories which may be usefully *applied* to literary and artistic problems. The concept of Operant Behaviour has been tried on Lacios, for instance, and here Inez Hedges draws on Frame Theory and the principles of computer-assisted Natural Language Processing as a means of getting inside the subversive intentions of Dada and the Surrealists, for whom art was a strategy designed to accustom us to accept new ways of seeing reality.

Proceeding through stages of increasing theoretical difficulty, Hedges opens with an excellent case for defining alchemy as both a central theme and a structural device in works as varied as Ernst's narrative collage *La Femme 100 têtes*, Breton's novel *Nadja* and Artaud's film *La Coquille et le clergyman*. Before the gold of pure seeing could be separated from the base matter of custom and prejudice, the Surrealists needed to dislocate the norms of, in the jargon, break the frames. Any response to art mobilizes frames of reference which may be cultural, aesthetic, social or linguistic: *the observer rearranges them as he* seeks to make sense of what he is shown. *Un Chien andalou* frustrates our expectations of what films can be. It disturbs the conventional patterns just as automatic writing or Duchamp's "readymades" dislocate our structural norms by decontextualizing words and objects. The tactic is only marginally part of a Games Theory, for the jokes and puns are a means to an end: "black humour" represents not only revolt but reconstruction. Surrealist frame-breaking was accompanied by "frame-making" which aimed at replacing the old patterns of cognition with new models of seeing through the creation of epistemological uncertainties. Thus a porcelain urinal may not be art, but by renaming it *Fountain* Duchamp demonstrated that art is not an act of representation or even of making but of perception.

Deconstructing the better to construct, Dada and Surrealism rallied round metaphor, which, with its bold mismatching of disparate ideas, itself constitutes a form of frame-making. If the collage is a cluster of metaphors, then surrealist films tend frequently to be animated collages. Verbal and visual images are consistently used to direct the appercentive response of readers and spectators who are induced to unlearn the old referential modes and change their perception not merely of art but of reality. Only then will "l'Alchimie du Verbe" have done its work.

From all this it might seem that Hedges's book simply re-jigs the familiar elements of surrealist iconoclasm: the exploding of convention, the clashing of symbols and the snooks cocked at bourgeois values. In the event her thesis, part critidism and part literary/linguistic theory, not only offers a clean-cut and invigorating interpretation of Dada and *Surrealism* but also tests that interpretation by applying frame analysis to three late or post-surrealist writers, Franz Mon, Julio Cortázar and Maurice Roche. Moreover, as appendix sets out a computer program – which uses Spitbol, a fast version of Snobol-4, names that seem to come straight out of Ernst – designed to stimulate automatic writing. The program incorporates the basic Bretonesque linguistic structures and is recommended as a "research tool" to understanding the processes of automatic writing rather than as "a perfected method of generating surrealist texts". The reservation has proved well-founded. For while the program is ingenious and informative, it is unusable without further significant inputs of user ingenuity. As Dr Hedges concedes, Breton might not have accepted the results as authentic, but it would have been interesting to have them.

The spring 1983 issue of *World Literature Today*, the quarterly magazine which aims to transcend "parochial national literatures", examines the theme of freedom in the work of ten contemporary writers. In *his introduction*, editor Ivar Ivask takes a motto from Marguerite Yourcenar – "I have several fatherlands, in the sense that I belong perhaps to none" – and notes that of the ten writers discussed in the ensuing essays, five are no longer living in their native countries. The ten are Italo Calvino; Max Frisch, Milan Kundera, George Konrád, Joseph Brodsky, Susan Sontag, V.S. Naipaul, Elie Wiesel, Alan Paton and Yourcenar. Subscriptions cost $20 (US) and $27 (foreign) from 630 Parrington Oval Room 110, Norman, Oklahoma 73019.

Cold discomfort

Anne Duchêne

Nina Bawden
The Ice House
236pp. Macmillan. £7.95. 0 333 35244 0

The Ice House is a little tragi-comedy about adultery which leaves a number of icicles in the mind, but Nina Bawden has, with what may be called an honourably complaisant awareness of *her status as a popular novelist, done* all she presumably felt she must do to keep discomfort to a minimum.

Her central concern is with the pain of an intelligent woman, happily and confidently married, who discovers her husband's infidelity. After the first ravages of jealousy, she experiences this as a kind of retrospective negation, an obliteration of her self. She tries to explain it to her one close friend:

> one doesn't exist except in relation to people to whom one is of importance. What they think of you, how they see you, is what you *are*. I wasn't important all that time, or not in the way I believed that I was, as his wife, as his love, and so the part I was playing was a false one. He made me act falsely, and so I don't exist.

This cry of pain has its comical aspect; Ruth is speaking to her old friend Daisy, who is in fact the mistress in question. Ruth's husband, Joe, taken unawares, has confessed adultery with one Eunice Pilbeam, a physiotherapist – Pilbeam because he once loved the film star of that name, and physiotherapist because he is a hypochondriac. Joe, whatever the author's intentions towards him, remains a mumbler and a jumbler, and his masculine attempts to assert that he loves both women get shortish shrift.

Daisy, who is indolently – even lethally – good-natured, is embarrassed by Ruth's distress, but another hundred pages of the book pass before she admits to her rôle in the affair, and decently decamps to Australia. Joe never knows she has confessed to Ruth; he is bemused by her hearty *letters to his wife*, and by the latter's cheerful reception of them. The book's concluding paragraph, a resumé of all this, demonstrates Nina Bawden's irony in full flood, and also shows how *much of her thesis has to be summed up* in it:

> This is not the Daisy he remembers, but then the Daisy he remembers has become mysteriously confused in his *mind* with Eunice Pilbeam. That illusory figure materializes rather too often, a dark shape on the edge of his vision that he recognizes for what it is: the lie that has somehow *worked its way into and distorted his* life. There are moments (usually when he has been drinking) when he longs to exorcise this uncomfortable phantom, tell Ruth, put things straight between them. But she *seems to be happy. Since* he stopped committing adultery, his blood pressure, that had become worryingly high, has reverted to normal. So why open old wounds? It would hurt Ruth, spoil her friendship with Daisy. It might even hurt him. Daisy is a long way off – in every way, in another country. The only time she comes to him, unencumbered by Eunice, is when he and Ruth make love. Ruth laughs more often than she used to on these occasions and sometimes when she laughs (though not always) she reminds him of Daisy.

This is a dying fall, and a terrifying one. No need to doubt the ice-house as a metaphor for the emotional glaciation which seals in so many lives. A physical ice-house appears in the book's *twenty-page opening sequence*; Ruth and Daisy are schoolfriends in 1951, when Ruth reveals to a horrified Daisy that her father, who is still violent, used to punish her by imprisoning her in a Victorian ice-house sunk in their garden; we also learn that both fathers have offended – Ruth's by cruelty, Daisy's by womanizing – though it is never certain how much of the rest of the book should be read beneath this sign.

The ice-cold clarity of Ruth's pain is only allowed to the surface intermittently, and has to contend with a great many strong and contrary currents. Ruth and Daisy are neighbours in a terrace of "pretty but shoddily built Georgian houses" (in, one imagines, North London) and their dialogue is overlaid with a great *deal of adventitious material – about* Daisy's mother-in-law, about street violence in London, about uneasiness during a cruise on the Nile when President Sadat is killed – which, though all of it is impeccably observed, seems random, or at best only tangential, in so short a book.

The blurb-writer has nailed to the book's masthead a quotation from Goethe: "Love is an ideal thing, marriage a real thing, the confusion of the real and the ideal always brings punishment", and this, too, whether or not it has the author's assent, seems unhelpful. The comfortable complicity of the adulterers often seems a good deal more "real" than the audacious ideal of marriage, as it is mourned by Ruth. Perhaps this may have been in the author's mind; but she has allowed *what might; given her skill and* intelligence, have been a tough ice-breaking vessel to sail as a rather heavily-laden pleasure craft in familiar waters.

Scarlet rage

P. R. Broughton

Ellen Douglas
A Lifetime Burning
212pp. Bodley Head. £7.95. 0 370 30957 X

As for most writers from the American South, the present for Ellen Douglas is saturated with the past. Like too few women novelists, Douglas speaks openly about female sexuality and compassionately about both men and women; she has been doing so for some twenty-two years.

In *A Lifetime Burning*, her sixth book, Douglas's narrator Corinne (we do not know her surname) declares, "How can one value privacy over truth?" and sets out, at the age of sixty-two, to make a record which will tell the truth about herself and her marriage. The novel consists entirely of diary entries, written apparently in 1980-81 but returning, in references to Corinne's life, to the 1920s, and that of her family to the 1880s. Corinne's dilemma is twofold: how to know the truth and how to tell it. Seeking truth, she offers different versions of everything from the Ariadne legend to a grandmother's suicide. She provides alternative explanations for why she married George, why he married her, and why despite their mutual respect they closed off their emotions from each other. She talks to different audiences (herself, George, their children, and strangers). She wants to be a Joyce Cary heroine but is afraid she is senile or crazy. She hopes her diary is magnanimous and forgiving but suspects it is vindictive and self-serving. Though she "used to be a reasonably decent person", she fears she has become a nasty old woman. She wonders if she can tell the truth impartially; we wonder if she does.

Corinne has loved, hated, and despised George; but she acknowledges "We have always, even when I hated him, gotten along well." She feels herself spurned, but protects George and herself by withholding for a time the true story of his infidelity. At times she has sealed off her sexuality; at others her "pent-up lust must have been evident as the scarlet buttocks of a mandrill". Such explicit references to female desire are one of the strengths of *A Lifetime Burning*. That strong protagonist reminds us that neither men nor women need to be reticent in describing the life of the body.

The treatment of a lesbian relationship is not so convincing. We know that Corinne and another woman were friends; we are amused that twenty years ago in a small southern city, "one of the advantages *of a love affair between women was that* no one, *no one*, suspected it was a love affair"; but we cannot imagine these two women in bed together because Douglas only generalizes about their being "carnal and spiritual sisters". Such a cliché compares badly with the vividness of Corinne's saying, "I feel no particular pleasure when I touch a women's breasts, although I suppose I would feel pleasure if a cat licked mine."

The most disturbing scenes in *A Lifetime Burning* are of brutal male sexual behaviour. These scenes, set in the nineteenth century, and their legacy, illustrate one of the book's theses: that abusive or neglectful heterosexuality can foster homosexuality. Douglas repeats that pattern with both men and women, and shows contemporary men as much as *women* to be in need of love, decency, meaning.

In today's South, and in California, George and Corinne encounter strange people suffering from various obsessions, grasping various panaceas. Beyond them is a world of disease, starvation, political oppression and the threat of annihilation. Given all this, the questions of how to tell a tale or how to effect better understanding between well-off people may seem at worst irrelevant, at best self-indulgent; Corinne concludes that searching for the truth about oneself, reaching out to others in love and forgiveness as her diary is intended to do, is the only hope.

There are two problems with that conclusion. It begs the question – it does not suggest how looking into the self can affect the external world – and second, it does not fit with what we know about Corinne. The harrowing nineteenth-century narrative, supposedly found in a *hundred-year-old* diary, was invented, it turns out, by her. That raises a crucial issue: are we to assume that this picture of male brutality is merely a female projection? Is Corinne's hostility to George (she wants to take "a stone to crack George's skull with, to crush his genitals, [and] to pound him to death") consistent with her plea for love and *forgiveness*? If sane human behaviour is never wholly consistent, is it ever this inconsistent?

Here Douglas slips. She wants to show "the terrible irremediable reservations between men and women that make us feel sometimes that we must be different species"; but she risks making Corinne appear so torn by female sexual rage that we fear she would have been angry with George or another man no matter what he did.

Anathemata

Hilary Davies

Paul Ferris
A Distant Country
208pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £7.95. 0 297 78246 0

This, Paul Ferris's ninth novel, comes larded with fulsome praise for two previous ones, *The Detective* and *Talk to me about England*, plus the blurb-writer's stock-in-trade, "disturbing and compelling": it is all sadly evocative of what lies in store.

Harry Jenkins is a London Welsh *par excellence*: he lives in a Surrey inhabited only, it seems, by the breed that drinks gin and tonic, commits adultery, returns Conservatives to Parliament and builds bonfires of leaves in the autumn. This last assumes a short-lived significance when the protagonist's second wife, Rose, tries unsuccessfully to burn her auto-biography, "A Surrey Childhood". For Rose is a *true* suburbanite; Harry, despite being far older and Director of Information (Coal) for the Energy Board, never quite makes it to respectability in mortgage land, while at the same time he becomes anathema to those Welshmen who have remained in the "distant country". He is rapidly confronted with these conflicting aspects of his existence when he is sent on a trouble-shooting mission to Borlase, a sleepy post-industrial suburb facing the Bristol Channel. The Energy Board's decision to resink a mine there has, predictably, aroused the ire of the Sons of Llewellyn and their ilk, concerned to protect the sanctity of Gelli Aur (The Golden Grove) where the Cross of Brychan, legendary founder of Wales, is supposed to lie.

The action then shuttles breathlessly *between south-east England and south* Wales as Jenkins grows more and more embroiled in his past: his childhood; memories of his first wife, Lowri, estranged and then killed in a car crash; a new mistress who reminds him unhealthily of Lowri; and trouble at the pit. Meanwhile his daughter is busy getting pregnant and his wife antiseptically seducing Harry's junior liaison officer by way of revenge. Events go downhill, from the merely pyschologically unpleasant to the physically nasty: a shaft floods after a bomb explosion, Gelli Aur is destroyed overnight by the semi-*literate Saxon master sinker*, someone even gets killed. In so far as a novel about amateurish Welsh nationalists can be said to have a climax, this is it. Afterwards, it's plain sailing to the re-assertion of the Board's supremacy (Westminster-based), bread and circuses for the local Welsh and Harry's capitulation to Rose and Dingley Dell land. All's *well* that ends well.

But not quite. First, it is not at all clear what Paul Ferris is trying to do. If he is seeking to divert, then *A Distant Country* fails dismally. The spy element, the large proportion of the novel that it takes up notwithstanding, remains obstinately unreal. The recounting of a series of bungled attempts at sabotage, unravelled not by the local CID man but by Jenkins himself – and this in very haphazard fashion punctuated by would-be erotic escapades – is not likely to appeal to many readers' sense of suspense.

It seems likelier that the novel is intended to address profounder issues: the ambivalent position of the expatriate Welshman, the truth or otherwise of the clash between Celt *and Saxon, medieval myth pitted* against a twentieth-century worship of utility. All these are admirable topics, though they tend these days to be treated more searchingly by poets than by prose writers. The problem here lies in the novel's utter lack of depth. The characters are two-dimensional and/or stereotypes. If one is attempting to offset the often sentimental image the Welsh have of themselves, something more than Harry Jenkins is required; it is simply not enough that he has no Welsh and no real interest in his heritage. There are worse caricatures; Pritchard's wife, invisible but for the Biblical tracts adorning her husband's sandwiches; the stockbroker "Jack-man" who paws Rose. Last but emphatically not least, the novel bears the marks of shoddy, rushed composition. Its staccato sentences attack remorselessly, and are packed with clichéd images – "his eyes . . . felt like soft-boiled eggs". There are more amusing infelicities: "waggling their limp seasons" (tickets, you understand) and "Babies so early in the evening were below the belt" are two of the choicest.

New Stories 8, edited by Karl Miller and published by Hutchinson in association with the Arts Council of Great Britain and PEN (227pp. £8.95. 0 09 152380 X) contains stories by John Hall, Don Bloch, Peter Parker, Christopher Burns, Francis Wyndham, Oliver Sacks, Penelope Fitzgerald, David Craig, John Murray, Susan Boyd, Carol Singh, Jane Oxenford, Martin Elliott and F. S.; and a section of biographical notes on the authors. The Arts Council and PEN regularly invite writers to send stories for consideration; further details from the secretary, PEN, 7 Dilke Street, London SW3 4JE.

Among this week's contributors

Craig Brown is co-author of *The Book of Royal Lists*, 1982.

Marjorie Chibnall is the author and translator of *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 volumes, 1969 to 1980.

J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson is President of the British Arachnological Society. His books include *Tooth and Claw: Defensive Strategies in the Animal World*, 1980.

Linda Colley's *In Defiance of Oligarchy: the Tory Party 1714–60*, was published last year. She is Assistant Professor of History at Yale University.

James Cornford is Director of the Nuffield Foundation, and co-author with J. C. Mitchell of *The Political Demography of Cambridge 1832–1868*, 1978.

David Coward's study of Marivaux's novels, *A Night of Serious Drinking*, was published earlier this year.

Valentine Cunningham is editor of *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 1980.

P. R. H. Du Boulay is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the University of London. His most recent book, *Germany in the Later Middle Ages*, will be published next month.

Katherine Duncan-Jones's edition of the *Selected Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* was published in 1980.

John B. Dunlop is the author of *The New Russian Revolutionaries*, 1976. He is Professor of Russian at Oberlin College, Ohio.

Victoria Glendinning's biography of Vita Sackville-West will be published in September.

J. N. Gray is a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, and author of *Mill on Liberty: A defence* which was published earlier this year.

Christopher Kirwan is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

Kathleen Lennon is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Hull.

H. R. Loyn's *Governance of England* will be published in the autumn.

Lord Mc Gregor was Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Press between 1975 and 1977. His recent books include *Social History and Law Reform*, 1981.

Wolf Mendl is Reader in War Studies at King's College, London.

Pat Morris is a lecturer in Zoology at Royal Holloway College, London and author of *Hedgehogs*, 1983.

A. D. Nuttall's *Overheard by God: Fiction and Prayer in Herbert, Milton, Donne and St John* was published in 1980.

Julia O'Faolain's collection of stories, *Daughters of Passion*, was published last February.

Allen Paterson is Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario.

T. J. Reed is a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford.

George Steiner's novel, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* was published in 1981.

Frances Spalding is the author of *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, 1981.

John Stokes is a lecturer in English at the University of Warwick, and author of *Oscar Wilde*, 1978.

P. M. L. Thompson is Director of the Institute of Historical Research and Professor of History at the University of London.

John Weightman is the author of *The Concept of the Avant-Garde: Explorations in Modernism*, 1973.

Richard Wendorf is Associate Chairman of the Department of English at Northwestern University.

Paperback fiction in brief

Patricia Craig

ELIZABETH VON ARNIM. *Fraulein Schmidt and Mr Anstruther*. 379pp. 0 86068 317 6. *Vera*. 319pp. 0 86068 316 8. Virago. £3.50 each ☐ *Fraulein Schmidt and Mr Anstruther*, first published in 1907, consists of a series of spirited letters from a German landlady's stepdaughter to the well-bred young Englishman who first proposes to marry her, and then proposes to do nothing of the sort. Rose-Marie Schmidt is an amiable and intelligent heroine, and her letters are often captivating; but the author is handicapped from the start by having lumbered herself with a tedious narrative form. *Vera* was first published in 1921; apparently based on the author's own second marriage (to Bertrand Russell's elder brother), it deals with the appalling domestic behaviour – bullying alternated with petting – of a husband who fancies himself to be above reproach. Carefully constructed, and suitably deadly in feeling, it is nevertheless too ponderously coy at times, and too uneconomical at others, to hold much appeal for a present-day readership.

BERYL BAINBRIDGE. *A Weekend with Claude*. 152pp. Fontana. £1.50. 0 00 616571 0 ☐ This is the revised version of 1981, not the original 1967 one; the book acquired its present shape by losing twelve or so of its characters, as well as undergoing other forms of simplification. It now bears a closer resemblance to the characteristic Bainbridge novel, which includes inventiveness, briskness, a feeling for the contretemps and a kind of highly-charged realism among its assets. *A Weekend with Claude*, however, is still far too mannered and convoluted to rank with the best of Bainbridge.

VITA SACKVILLE-WEST. *The Edwardians*. 349pp. 0 86068 359 1. *All Passion Spent*. 297pp. 0 86068 358 3. Virago. £3.50 each ☐ *The Edwardians*, published in 1930, is about the end of an era. 1914 looms rather obtrusively in the novel, and the foresight of one of the characters – "There may be a war . . . which will kill you off" – is a consequence, also rather obtrusive, of the author's hindsight. This was Vita Sackville-West's most popular piece of fiction, dealing as it does with the sexual intrigues and other activities of the upper classes, and partaking of some of the qualities of magazine fiction – where a persistent illusion is the existence of a *beau monde*. It isn't a subtle novel, but, as Victoria Glendinning remarks in a persuasive introduction, it is often attractively bold and dashing. *All Passion Spent*, which followed *The Edwardians* in 1931, is a quieter novel; its subject is a very old lady whom widowhood has suddenly enabled to adopt some new and agreeable practices. Lady Slane, wife of a statesman and mother of six children, retires at eighty-eight into a small house in Hampstead, from which setting she reviews the incidents of her life. The past doesn't stand still, however, any more than the present. This is a thoughtful novel, but not by any means enthralling.

BARBARA COMYNS. *Our Spoons Came From Woolworths*. 223pp. Virago. £2.95. 0 86068 353 2 ☐ In her second novel, first published in 1950, Barbara Comyns's distinctive manner is very much in evidence: you could call it faux-naïf with a touch of fatalism. (The style is faux-naïf, that is; the characters are usually just naive.) The details of an unsatisfactory marriage on the fringes of bohemian London in the 1930s are savoured by the author, while her heroine/narrator suffers in a deadpan, plaintive way; Barbara Comyns's achievement is to make you see something attractive in the quality of being put-upon. Small-scale, homely and odd though it is, there is nevertheless something sharp and engaging about this book.

WINIFRED HOLTBY. *The Land of Green Ginger*. 311pp. Virago. £3.50. 0 86068 250 1 ☐ In Winifred Holtby's third novel, first published in 1927, a marriage subjected to insupportable strains is examined. The setting is a Yorkshire farmhouse, and the time just after the First World War. The husband is a charming young man rendered progressively less charming by illness and the effects of fighting in the trenches; the wife/heroine, domestic disasters notwithstanding, retains her charm, her equanimity and her romantic attitude to foreign travel. The novel doesn't always exclude extraneous material, and its style is sometimes irritatingly whimsical; it is, nevertheless, an agreeable period piece.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH. *Joanna Godden*. 316pp. 0 86068 286 2. *Susan Spray*. 374pp. 0 86068 374 5. Virago. £3.50 each ☐ Joanna Godden, twenty-three when she inherited her father's Sussex farm in 1897, is a strong-willed, stout-hearted young woman with a doubtful taste in dress and an original way of disposing of besotted suitors. As far as over-embellished, middlebrow writing goes, Sheila Kaye-Smith is fairly unexceptionable, and her period details are not without interest, now that we are so much further from the era she describes. It's possible, though, that what passed for brisk and colourful in 1921 will now strike the reader as bland and tedious; really popular fiction is often so strongly bound up with the mood of its time that it resists revival. First published in 1931, and set in the middle of the last century, *Susan Spray* concerns a farm labourer's daughter with a talent for preaching and a notable capacity for self-deception. As in all Sheila Kaye-Smith's works, important characters are for ever dropping dead in the interests of the plot, events progress in a straightforward way and coincidences abound. Nearly everyone, too, speaks in a rich Sussex voice; local colour means a lot to this novelist. Poverty, religious feelings, farm life and social betterment have rarely received such lavish treatment.

EDITH WHARTON. *Roman Fever*. 238pp. Virago. £3.50. 0 86068 373 7 ☐ The nine stories which make up this collection were written in the early part of the century but not issued in book form until 1964; this is their first publication in Britain. All skilfully constructed, and all marked by an Edwardian worldliness and asperity, these stories – one or two playful interludes apart – deal with the consciences and concupiscence of the rich.

PENELOPE LIVELY. *The Road to Lichfield*. 216pp. Penguin. £1.50. 0 14 00 6117 7 ☐ Penelope Lively's first novel, but not her first work of fiction, *The Road to Lichfield* (1977) rehearses the theme of change, time passing and continuity which is so important a facet of her admirable children's books. This, indeed, gives substance to what on the face of it might seem a fairly commonplace account of an unexceptional marriage, with recollections of childhood, a dying parent and an episode of infidelity thrown in. An unimpeachable prose style, as well as the author's rational respect for the things of the past, make *The Road to Lichfield* an impressive piece of writing, and not at all the banal undertaking its subject matter suggests.

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Usefully superior

Maurice Larkin

GEORGE WEISZ
The Emergence of Modern Universities in France, 1863–1914
397pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £30.30.
0 691 05375 8

The Third Republic in France was given many insulting names in its time: "the slut", "the republic of pals" and, most damning of all, "the republic of *professeurs*". Admittedly the bitterest of its ideological battles, notably those with the Church, were fought in the sphere of primary and secondary education. Yet higher education was inevitably affected since it moulded the teaching personnel and examination system of the nation, as well as its civil service. The development of higher education might therefore seem a potentially vibrant issue in the chequered history of the Republic; and so it was, as long as the politicians and their constituents saw political or social advantage to be gained from the changes that were being proposed. But as George Weisz's lucid and informative book makes clear, significant change in the system tended to be confined to the periods when the politicians and their patrons saw it as in their interest to support the academic reformers – or to periods when reforming *universitaires* happened to be in ministerial office. At other times the issue of reform tended to degenerate into a conflict between the self-interest of academics, seeking improved status for their profession, and the value-for-money concerns of the government and private benefactors.

The specific concern of this book is with the universities between 1863 and 1914, rather than with the *grandes écoles* that pre-empted the professional formation of a major section of the country's elites. Yet so tangled was the skein of French higher education that the author devotes considerable space to distinguishing the functions and character of its various strands; and even hardened scholars of the subject will find much to value in the clarity and convenience of Dr Weisz's chronological account of their evolution.

The liberal politicians of the Republic saw the universities as having a Janus-faced role to play. They could be counted on to help exorcize the old spectre of clericalism, but they were also expected to help exorcize the future spectre of political rule by the masses. They were to provide the middle classes with the intellectual means to ensure middle-class leadership: "the flood of democracy must run into a . . . barrier of visible and useful superiority whose prestige compels recognition", as Emile Boutmy wrote in 1871. At the same time the acquiescence of the masses would be won by propagating a culture of national consensus, in which the lower classes could eventually aspire to ascendancy – either by mounting the staircase of meritocracy or by choosing to wait for the lift of gradual social improvement. In this context the universities' history curriculum for secondary schools would continue to be "a school of morality, respect and moderation", as Victor Duruy had proclaimed in the later years of the Second Empire.

These Republican aims were fulfilled only too well. The anticlerical campaigns of the period are part of the mainstream of French history, while the middle-class domination of student places and the nation's *cadres* continues to be a firm fact of French life a century later. Yet the universities' contribution to this state of affairs was rewarded only unevenly. They were given the wherewithal to multiply their staff three and a half times between 1865 and 1919 – but for a student population that had more than quadrupled. Salaries and conditions were improved, but the increase in incomes and prospects compared unfavourably with what was being obtained in a number of other professions. It is true that some of the inequalities between Parisian and provincial *universitaires* were lessened, but the gulf remained wide and a source of resentment. At the same time academics looked enviously at the greater prestige and higher incomes of their German counterparts, and argued that Germany owed part of her economic and technological strength to the role and respect she accorded to her universities. Weisz is suitably sceptical, and points out that the example of foreign institutions provided ammunition for the university's critics as well as for its members – especially for those who claimed that the scattered provincial faculties of France should be grouped into a handful of large, comprehensive universities. Although the faculties were eventually grouped into sixteen universities in 1896, staff and local interests resisted all attempts to reduce the number of faculties. As one professor emotively asserted, "the provost of Lorraine would die" if Nancy were without a university.

Weisz analyses these issues with thoroughness and perception, and illuminates his own researches by drawing on the growing body of parallel scholarship, much of it American, on the *grandes écoles* and other institutions of higher education. Debates on university structure and conditions do not always make compelling reading, as the protagonists would be the first to admit. And if the mind occasionally wanders during parts of Weisz's survey, it is because he is primarily concerned with quantifiable and institutional change, rather than with the much more difficult question of the effect of these changes on the character and quality of university life and teaching. He does not attempt to evoke the feel and savour of the teaching process in the hard-benched amphitheatres beneath the grey-green stare of the allegorical murals, so redolent of the humanistic ideals of the time. The autobiographies, memoirs and literature of the period are rich in reminiscences of university life, and one would have welcomed a few examples to illustrate the practical consequences of the debates and institutional changes that Weisz delineates.

Observers of the present plight of universities will find much food for thought in these arguments of a century ago. They will note with interest and envy the attitude displayed by the French director of higher education, Louis Liard, who told a congress of academics in 1894 that they should not only strenuously seek to supplement their revenue with private funding but they should be prepared to spend vigorously: "If I dared, I would add 'endettez-vous'. I believe profoundly in the continued existence of institutions which are in debt because creditors follow their progress with great solicitude and pray for their prosperity."

Romania's cradle

Dennis Deletant

STEFAN PASCU
A History of Transylvania
Translated by D. Robert Ladd
318pp. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, distributed in the UK by TABS. $26.
0 8143 1722 7

To write a history of Transylvania is a hazardous enterprise. The province's subjection at different periods to Hungarian, Ottoman, Habsburg and Romanian authority, and the presence of Romanian, Hungarian and German populations there, require that the historian be conversant with the relevant languages and scholarship. His task is complicated by the dearth of historical evidence and the existence of conflicting Romanian and Hungarian histories of Transylvania which are mutually incompatible.

Most Romanian historians hold that the inhabitants of the region, the Dacians, were conquered by the Romans under Trajan in two campaigns between 101 and 106 AD. The Romans colonized their new province with settlers from all parts of the Empire, who intermarried with the local population and Romanized it, thus producing a Daco-Roman people who were the forebears of the Romanians. After the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 271–75, the province became a gateway to the south for successive invaders, with the Daco-Romans seeking refuge in the mountainous regions, thus preserving their Latin language and culture. This explanation of the Romanian presence in Transylvania is known as the theory of Daco-Roman continuity.

Hungarian historians discount this theory by arguing that when the Magyars entered the central Danubian basin at the end of the ninth century, Transylvania's only inhabitants were Slavonic tribes. They point to the preponderance of Slavonic place-names and to the fact that the first mention of Vlachs or Romanians in the documents of the Hungarian chancery occurs only in a charter of 1222. Here it should be stressed that obscurity envelops the other inhabitants of Transylvania since the earliest documents relating to the province date only from the twelfth century. The Hungarian crown extended its authority over the region by encouraging Szekel and German colonists to settle during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The presence of a Romanian population is ascribed to immigration at the end of the twelfth century from south of the Carpathians, whence Romanian shepherds were given the right to settle in Transylvania by the Hungarian kings.

It is understandable, then, that both Romanian and Hungarian national ideologies should regard Transylvania as an integral part of the homeland: for the former it is the cradle of the Romanian people, for whom it provided a haven in the face of foreign invasion after the Roman withdrawal; for the latter it represented, by its continuity of the maintenance of a precarious independence, the continuity of the Hungarian state, despite Ottoman and Habsburg conquest of the Hungarian kingdom during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Hungarian national ideology cannot accept the 1920 Trianon Treaty award of the province to Romania (on the basis that eleven of its fifteen counties had a clear Romanian majority), thus severing a thousand-year Hungarian link with Transylvania, which has left it with a substantial Hungarian minority, just as the Romanian ideology can but regard it as Naboth's vineyard.

Stefan Pascu's book, the first extensive history of Transylvania to be published in English, presents a synthesis of his *Voievodatul Transilvaniei* (2 volumes, 1972 and 1979) and passages from his other works on Transylvania. It is the work of a Romanian nationalist set within a Marxist framework. His history stresses the historical primacy and continuity of the Romanian presence. It underlines the national consciousness and unity of all Romanians in Transylvania and across the Carpathians in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. The political boundaries that divide them are artificial and will inevitably be dismantled in Transylvania's inexorable progress towards its integration into a Greater Romania, ratified by the Trianon Treaty. Yet the author, as a Transylvanian by birth and education and the doyen of Romanian historians, has performed a laudable feat in producing this synthesis. His use of Hungarian and German-language sources has ensured that the integral place of these two peoples in the history of Transylvania is not overlooked, although in certain respects it is not given due emphasis. The German settlement at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the influence of the Reformation, receive only perfunctory attention (the late Erich Roth's fundamental study, *Die Reformation in Siebenbürgen*, 1962–64, is not mentioned in the bibliography).

The narrative not only embraces political developments but is rich in social history and demographical statistics. Particularly gratifying is Pascu's insistence, in contrast to the assertions in most post-war Romanian publications, that the creation of the Uniate Church from the union of part of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania with Rome in 1700 brought advantages to the Romanians. One of its principal benefits was educational. Since the maintenance of the Union was held to require well-trained Uniate priests, several Romanian students were admitted to Catholic seminaries, in particular to the Jesuit colleges in Transylvania. Through education this generation of Romanians became aware of their Roman origin and of the Latinity of their language, and their historical and linguistic works provided the stimulus for the development at the end of the eighteenth century of a national consciousness amongst the Romanians of Transylvania.

Above all this book is a reflection of the role history often plays in Eastern Europe. Where historiography and historical linguistics are called upon to legitimize a nation's claim to its ideal homeland, scholars in both disciplines are seen as guardians of the national interest. The fate of the nation is perceived as being inextricably bound up with the promotion of the theses upon which its self-perception is based. In this respect the publication of Pascu's book in English is valuable for its revelation to us of the intensity of Romanian historical awareness.

Five fingers in the pie

T. C. W. Blanning

DEREK MCKAY and H. M. SCOTT
The Rise of the Great Powers 1648–1815
378pp. Longman. £12.50 (paperback, £6.95).
0 582 48553 3

In setting out to write a one-volume history of international relations between the end of the Thirty Years War and the end of the Napoleonic Empire, Derek McKay and Hamish Scott shouldered a burden of potentially crushing weight. At a time when a single French diplomat of modest achievement has been deemed worthy of well over a thousand pages on just the early part of his career, to have to encompass the fortunes of Louis XIV, Peter the Great, Maria Theresa, Frederick the Great, Pitt *père et fils*, Joseph II, Catherine the Great and Napoleon – to mention only a few of the superstars in which the period abounds – in a single work is to be asked a great deal. On the other hand, the need to be concise has had to be counterbalanced by the equally taxing need to be comprehensive. Not even such tiresome and tedious episodes as Isabella Farnese's Mediterranean intrigues or the self-destructive gyrations of the Poles could be ignored.

This formidable dual assignment has been accomplished with great skill in a book which combines the weight of a monograph with the breadth of a textbook. With clarity its chief virtue – clarity of organization, analysis and exposition – it can be read with pleasure and consulted with profit. In view of the current neglect of the diplomatic history of the period, this will surely remain the standard work on the subject for as long as it matters. The central theme is the emergence of the pentarchy of European powers – France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia. The first quarter of the book is dominated by the rise and fall of French hegemony in the second half of the seventeenth century. From a particularly interesting section Louis XIV emerges as a far less aggressive or even positive figure than his self-created "Sun-King" image has suggested. Slow, cautious, hesitant, he fought limited wars for limited ends, often ignoring the pleas of his advisers for the more ruthless application of military force. In the erosion of the hegemony he had established in the 1660s and 1670s, it is the Nine Years War of 1688–97 which is seen as decisive, for it witnessed the emergence of Great Britain as a great power, initiated a second Hundred Years War and was indeed "a struggle for Britain's constitution, religion and independence". The patriotic note sounded in that ringing peal of ideals is heard on other occasions too – when, for example, it is suggested that the British would have crushed the American rebels if only the beastly French had minded their own business.

If an American reader may wince only once on receipt of this unwelcome home truth, his wretched Austrian counterpart will find himself in a state of almost permanent discomfort. As the Habsburgs are depicted lurching from one disaster to another, their gains fortuitous, unmerited and illusory, their losses inevitable, self-induced and irretrievable, one cannot help but wonder how it was they lasted so long. Messrs McKay and Scott might do well to ponder the sage comment of Albert Sorel: "It has often been said that the Habsburgs were always one army and one idea behind the rest of Europe: and so they were, but they always had an army and they always had an idea." As they lumbered on ponderously but tenaciously, it was the Bourbons and the Bonapartes who ran out of armies and of ideas.

In a work of this scale and scope it is not possible, of course, to please everyone all of the time and the mildly Anglocentric perspective is more often illuminating than distorting. The same goes for the assessments of specific individuals and episodes, which are always penetrating, usually judicious and often refreshingly trenchant. As the excellent critical bibliography reveals, just about everything of importance – ancient and modern – has been consulted. Only on rare occasions has an apparent oversight led to misinterpretation: one example being the neglect of T. R. Clayton's revisionist work, which has produced an erroneous account here of the colonial origins of the Seven Years War. As this will be only the first of many editions, there will be ample opportunity to correct this and other minor blemishes. Among the latter – and there are not many – are the unsatisfactory account of Vergennes' policy (at present the dubious thesis of Jonathan Dull is followed too uncritically), the neglect of George III, and the underestimate of the role played by nationalism in destroying Napoleon.

William M. Johnston's *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* has now been reissued in paperback (515pp. University of California Press. $10.95. 0 520 04955 1). The book is arranged in five principal sections: "Habsburg Bureaucracy: Inertia versus Reform", "Aestheticism at Vienna", which includes chapters on music and the visual arts; "Positivism and Impressionism", including accounts of philosophy and Freudian psychology; "Bohemian Reform Catholicism" and "The Hungarian Cult of Illusion" and "Soothsayers of Modernity".

Paperbacks in brief

ANTARCTICA

APSLEY CHERRY-GARRARD. *The Worst Journey in the World*. 652pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 009501 2. □ "The scene can never leave my memory . . . Wright came across to us. 'It is the tent'." Thus Apsley Cherry-Garrard described the finding of the frozen bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers in the bleak wastes of Antartica and he wrote their epitaph in a phrase that went round the world – "it is a grave that kings must envy". Cherry-Garrard, born in 1886, was one of the youngest members of Scott's 1910–13 expedition and his account, a welcome reprint (first published by Constable in 1922 and reviewed in the *TLS* of December 14 that year), was written after he had been invalided out of the Great War. After taking such an active part in this legendary expedition – especially as one of the three men who made the Winter Journey of 1911 to Cape Crozier – the rest of Apsley Cherry-Garrard's life was an anti-climax and he died in 1959 after many years of intermittent illness. *The Worst Journey in the World*, however, is the most complete record left by any member of the expedition and together with Scott's own journal and the letters of his friend Wilson stands as one of the classics of Antarctic literature.

M.T.

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON. *South*. 376pp. Century Publishing. £4.95. 0 7126 0111 2. □ As Lord Hunt remarks in his introduction to this new edition of Shackleton's classic account (first published by Heinemann in 1919) of his "last great journey" – the attempted crossing, by a British party, of the Antarctic continent – "the fame of Shackleton and his men resides in their retreat, against the impossible odds presented by the forces of Nature. In particular, it arose from one brief episode which represented, but has tended to cast in shadow, a much longer story". That brief episode is of course Shackleton's sixteen-day voyage in the lifeboat James Caird and his subsequent trek across South Georgia to the whaling station, a feat of endurance and resourcefulness that has passed into the realms of legend. But Thomas's intentions are unknown. He may have regarded it, quite rightly, as a finished work. It presents a complete picture of boyhood. And it is wholly boyish, without a hint that the youngster who found pleasure in kicking a can along a Clapham street and knew the joy of striking sparks from a kerbstone, with iron-tipped boots would develop into a poet sensitive to all the moods of nature."

M.F.

BIOGRAPHY and MEMOIRS

EDWARD BLISHEN. *A Cackhanded War*. (230pp. 0 241 10919 1) and *Uncommon Entrance*. (155pp. 0 241 10920 5) Hamish Hamilton. £3.95 each. □ Edward Blishen's *Uncommon Entrance*, first published in 1974, has been likened to *Decline and Fall* as a comedy of a hapless young schoolmaster in a desillent prep-school though its first-person narration gives it at once more realism and less satire. Both these reissued works are stages in Blishen's many-volume autobiography, and his experiences as a teacher have provided material for several of his books, even though, as he confesses here, he has reshaped "people, places and episodes" into forms that are "inventions entirely". Such exuberant inventiveness brings its own problems: the set-pieces of schoolroom catastrophe work by accumulations of awfulness which are at times hilarious and at others mechanical. One senses in Blishen a pleasantness, absent from Waugh, which is emphasized in his clashes with the caricatural murderousness of the boys, and which promotes a dampening geniality in moments of farcical purport. The book is the sequel to the less high-spirited but more interesting *A Cackhanded War*, first published in 1972 and reviewed in the *TLS* of August 25 that year. Here Blishen describes his experience as a conscientious objector in the Second World War, working on the land; like being pitched into a school this throws him together with a whole new society of people, characters and the motivations for their objections to the War. These motivations are also constantly subject to the interrogation of combatants, not always in the friendliest light. Both books show Blishen's flair for characterizing groups of people on the margins of normality, but *A Cackhanded war* is necessarily the deeper and more provocative work.

A.J.G.H.

GEOFFREY KEYNES. *The Gates of Memory*. 428pp. Oxford University Press. £4.95. 0 19 285130 6. □ First published in 1981 and reviewed in the *TLS* of November 6 that year. The reviewer wrote: "his auto-biography is in many ways his most original work. Deprived of the formal apparatus of a learned monograph or article he has struck out on his own and two characteristics give *The Gates of Memory* a special quality. The first of these is an overriding desire to tell the truth, even, almost especially, if it hurts the teller . . . . The result . . . is not graceful but – and this is as true of the accounts of his many successes as of his few failures – it has the ring, sometimes harsh, of truth.

The other notable quality is craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is the quality that Keynes admires almost more than any other."

ARCHAEOLOGY

HOWARD CARTER. *The Tomb of Tutenkhamen*. 337pp. Century. £4.95. 0 7126 0054 X. □ Howard Carter's account of his discovery of Tutenkhamen's tomb was originally published by Cassell in three volumes, each one narrating the progress of the work to date, in 1923, 1927 and 1933 (reviewed in the *TLS* of March 15, March 31 and June 22 of those years, respectively). Although he writes clearly and enthusiastically, enabling the layman to enter into the excitement of the discovery, the detailed inventory of the thousands of objects and their state of decay or preservation is quite inadequate without the photographs by Harry Burton, the official photographer. These photographs were included in the original publications (and were praised in each of the *TLS* reviews for their expertise and clarity). But although one is almost tempted to say that this book is pointless without photographs, maps and diagrams, there is much in Carter's vivid description of every aspect of this extraordinary discovery that does not suffer by the omission. The rapacity of the would-be visitors to the tomb, for example: "The desire to visit the tomb became an obsession with the tourists, and in the Luxor hotels the question of ways and means became a regular topic of conversation. Those who had seen the tomb boasted of the fact openly, and to many of those who had not it became a matter of personal pride to effect an introduction somehow. To such lengths were things carried that certain tourist agencies in America actually advertised a trip to Egypt to see the tomb."

M.F.

CLASSICS

NORMAN AUSTIN. *Archery at the Dark of the Moon. Poetic Problems in Homer's Odyssey*. 297pp. University of California Press. £8.80. 0 520 04790 7. □ First published in 1975 and reviewed in the *TLS* of June 4, 1976.

WALTER BURKERT. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. 226pp. University of California Press. £5.95. 0 520 04770 2. □ First published in 1979. Reviewed in the *TLS* of November 21, 1980. The reviewer writes that Walter Burkert's approach "is eclectic in a good sense, even structuralist from time to time, but founded on a striking knowledge of the complex evidence (literary, epigraphical, archaeological, comparative) for this extensive subject, in which a passage from Homer, Sophocles or Plutarch can be productively combined with an Akkadian tablet, an Egyptian ideogram or a Byzantine gloss to produce a new insight."

CRITICISM

WAYNE C. BOOTH. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 552pp. University of Chicago Press. 0 222 06558 8. □ Booth's account of the techniques and stances of narrative art has been a favourite text-book since its appearance in 1961. Part of its attraction is the range of its reference to the classics of the novel form, part is the Jamesian authority of its terms and part their enduring applicability. Booth's survival must also owe something to his insistence that a novelist's "rhetoric" consists not merely in a mastery of certain aesthetic tropes but in the way a writer persuades us to accept the reality and values of a fictional world. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is a book that has found its place and, wisely, no attempt has been made to emend or update the body of the text for this new edition. Booth has added instead a long "afterword", where he tries to clarify some of the points that he thinks, over the years, have been misunderstood. Here too he surveys some of the recent advances in this increasingly crowded field, generously approving the contributions of Sheldon Sacks, Peter Rabinowitz and Gerard Genette and welcoming the rediscovery of Mikhail Bakhtin. The "afterword" ends with a detailed analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Company*, which serves to enrich and extend the main text, to make the point that a study of narrative cannot take place without the study of particular narratives, to express a deep critical admiration for an avowedly post-modernist writer and to provide an intriguingly sceptical yet resoundingly humanistic sense of an ending.

R.B.

DON GIFFORD. *Joyce Annotated: Notes for "Dubliners" and "A Portrait"*. 308pp. University of California Press. £8.50. 0 520 04610 2. □ American Joyceans have the small first version of Gifford's notes to *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* on their shelf beside the helpful, voluminous, but by no means definitive annotation to *Ulysses* compiled by him and Robert Seidman. English readers may now share in the enlarged second edition of the first of these scholarly crutches but need not feel that all the problems of reading Joyce – even of reading Joyce's early works – have now been solved. Gifford's bulk of reference is salutary. "The Dead" which had 60 notes now has 104; Chapter 4 of *A Portrait* had 75 and now has 131 nuggets of erudition applied to it. Dublin locations and texts of songs and poems are given in full. "Sisters" are nuns, we are told, and Gabriel Conroy shares his first name with the archangel. Yet the difficult task of judging the relevance of such annotations, whether for basic meaning or for some highflown interpretation, remains as difficult as ever. Gifford obviously feels this difficulty and, defending himself in his preface, unexpectedly puts the blame on Joyce himself, accusing him of being "too subtle" and "too offhand" in his allusiveness. This is decidedly curious in an annotator and downright wrong-headed in a critic. "Subtle" Joyce may not have been but "offhand" he was not.

R.B.

HISTORY

GAVIN MAXWELL. *Lords of the Atlas: The Rise and Fall of the House of Glaoua: 1893–1956*. 318pp. Century. £4.95. 0-7126 0068 X. □ It is good to have *Lords of the Atlas* (first published by Longmans in 1966) republished in paperback form, marred though it is by an illiterate biographical note about Gavin Maxwell ("He . . returned from Iraq with an offer [*sic*] which led on to a trio of bestsellers"), an embarrassing introduction by Geoffrey Moorhouse ("Now there's your writer's writer at work") and the line drawings of Ahmed Ben Lahcen Tija, correctly described as "unfortunate" by the *TLS* (October 24, 1966) on the book's first appearance. It tells the bloody story of two brothers, Mudani and T'hami el Glaoui, who rose in one generation from insignificance to become kingmakers – "to depose two Sultans, to become the true rulers of Morocco, to shake the whole French political structure." The final downfall of T'hami in 1956 added a new word to French political jargon: *glaouisé*, betrayed.

G.S.

PETER VANSITTART. *Voices from the Great War*. 303pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 006371 4. □ First published by Cape in 1981 and reviewed in the *TLS* of December 18 that year. The reviewer wrote that Vansittart "calls his book an anthology, but it isn't really that; it isn't really representative of anything except the compiler's sense of what the Great War was like, and what it meant. It would be more precise, I think, to call it a collage – an image composed of bits and pieces, which collectively *represents and interprets its subject. The pieces are small* (few longer than a page, some only a line or two) and very numerous. Quotations from some of the best-known writers of the war – Owen, Sassoon, Barbusse, Blunden, Hemingway, Rosenberg, Gurney – mix with soldiers' songs and sayings, newspaper headlines, personal letters and public proclamations."

FRANCO VENTURI. *Roots of Revolution: A History of Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. 850pp. University of Chicago Press. £12. 0 226 85270 9. □ First published as *Il Populismo Russo* in 1952 (reviewed in the *TLS* on June 12, 1953), the English translation by Francis Haskell with an introduction by Isaiah Berlin appeared in 1960 (reviewed in the *TLS* on August 12, 1960). Venturi's classic history covers the period from 1848 to the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and while concentrating on the ideas of groups within Russia he pays, as he writes in his preface, "special attention to the links between Russian Populism and the contemporary Socialist movements of Western Europe" and has "again and again referred to the bonds between Russian Populism and events in Italy during these years". The basic concern of this motley movement was whether it was possible in a pre-capitalist society to avoid the miseries and mediocrity of industrialization by developing the existing peasant communes into small autonomous units of production and consumption, and the culmination came in the mid-1870s with hundreds of educated young men and women "going to the people" in the hope of enlightening and mobilizing a largely suspicious and indifferent populace. Increasing recourse to terrorist tactics and severely repressive measures from the state led to their ultimate failure, but Venturi's fascinating study brings to life the individuals who dominated this period of intense discussion and idealism.

E.W.

POETRY

Poems and Songs of Robert Burns. Edited and introduced by James Barke. 736pp. Fontana. £2.95. 0 00 636674 0. □ First published in 1955, in a Royal Stewart tartan binding which to the original *TLS* reviewer (February 18, 1955) suggested "Edinburgh rock or Dundee shortbread", James Barke's edition was at the time the most complete Burns text which had been offered to the public. It contained many poems which had never before been published (yet excluded the vigorous bawdry which Burns himself considered "not quite ladies' reading") but has since been superseded by the three volumes of 1968 edited by James Kinsley. Barke's introduction progresses, by dint of a series of familiar platitudes and misinformed cliché – "Robert had the sketchiest of education"; "despite his hunger, he could laugh"; "there is no other poet like him" – and eventually reaches the rather surprising confusion that "in a peculiar sense, he isn't a poet at all" – but in spite of that (and in spite of Barke's now quintet of novels on the "life and loves" of Burns) the work reads as well as ever.

J.C.

POLITICS

M.J.C. VILE. *Politics in the USA*. 288pp. Hutchinson. £5.95. 0 09 151571 8. □ Third edition. First published by Allen Lane in 1970, and reviewed in the TLS of April 23, 1971. The reviewer wrote: "This is a sound comprehensive and clearly written exposition of American politics. For the most part it is descriptive, and some will feel it is distinguished more by lucidity than penetration. At times one feels that the restraint has been too great, and that though Professor Vile is a safe guide through the complexities of the American system he fails to communicate the excitement and vitality of American politics. It would, however, be unjust to suggest that this is a dull book or that it lacks shrewd comment."

TRAVEL and TOPOGRAPHY

ISABELLA BIRD. *The Golden Chersonese*. 384pp. Century. £5.95. 0 7126 0417 3. □ What Isabella Bird calls, after Ptolemy and Milton, the Golden Chersonese was more *familiarly known in her time as the* Malay Peninsula. A fairly narrow strip along the West Coast was administered by the British and yielded large quantities of tin and other raw materials; the rest was virgin, unexplored and unsurveyed. She visited the area in 1879, travelling in relative comfort, but still admirably impervious (though far from oblivious) to the effects of heat, humidity, exhaustion and mosquitoes. Her personality, revealed with disarming ingenuousness in these letters to her sister (first published in 1883 by John Murray), proves more fascinating than the distant time and place from which these missives hail. No cultural relativist, she: the native Mohammedans are "bigoted" to a man; the bone-structure of their faces is inherently ugly; they are too feckless to make good policemen, and will have to be replaced by Sikhs; no wonder, then, that the industrious Chinese outnumber them five or ten to one. But, to her credit, she is no hard-faced imperialist either. Her unforgettable description of the horrors of the Canton prison only causes her to reflect that "the framers of the Litany" knew dungeons worse still. A fine example of her fairness: a hospital in Hongkong is "clean and comfortable" but (to her horror!) "they never bleed, or leech, or blister, or apply any counter-irritant in cases of inflammation".

K.A.McC.

EDWARD THOMAS. *Oxford*. 267pp. Hutchinson. £3.95. 0 09 151721 3. □ First published in 1903. Edward Thomas writes in his Prefatory Note: "most of these chapters have been filled by a brief search into my recollections of Oxford. They aim, therefore, at recording my own impressions as faithfully as the resultant stir of fancy would allow."

H. D. WESTACOTT. *The Penguin Footpath Guides*. Mapped by Mark Richards.
The Brecon Beacons National Park. 165pp. £2.50. 0 14 046907 9.
Dartmoor for Walkers and Riders. 157pp. £2.50. 0 14 046906 0.
The North Downs Way 155pp. £2.50. 0 14 046913 1.
The Somerset and North Devon Coast Path 92pp. £1.95. 0 14 046905 2.

the reporters that explain the differences between the two texts. *A Shrew* gives Kate two sisters and the story of their wooing is radically different from the Bianca scenes in *The Shrew*. *A Shrew* also has a complete enclosing frame. A lord finds a drunken tinker asleep, dresses him up in fine clothes and, when he wakes up, persuades him that he is noble by having a play presented before him. Various solutions have been proposed but Oliver has an interesting variant which seems almost certainly correct. He believes that inconsistencies in the Folio text indicate that Shakespeare himself revised the play. In the course of that revision he also reduced the framework. *A Shrew* is constructed from an earlier version of the play that is now preserved in the Folio text. The difficulties that Oliver finds in the Folio text largely concern the character of Hortensio. He has to appear as an old friend of Petruchio's, as a suitor for Bianca who disguises himself as a music master in order to gain access to her, and as a disappointed lover who eventually abandons his suit to Bianca and marries, instead, a wealthy widow. Interestingly enough Brian Morris, who has recently edited the play for the *New Arden*, finds no inconsistencies in Hortensio's actions. The strongest evidence, however, is surely the change in the framework.

A Shrew appears in print among a group of plays which say on their title-pages that they had been acted by the Earl of Pembroke's company. We know that this company was forced to disband at that time and sell their costumes in order to pay their debts. It seems a reasonable conclusion that they also made what money they could by selling their available play texts to the Stationers. If they had access to a full text – as in the case of Marlowe's *Edward II* or Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* – they sold that. If they did not have a full text they made one up – as in the case of *Henry VI* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. It is not surprising that bankrupt actors made many mistakes. They had Petruchio beat his servants (beatings are always good theatre) but failed to notice that its dramatic point is that it is done in front of Kate. The comic complexities of the Bianca story completely defeated them. Yet they did not lack theatrical ability and they did know three things about the play and its effect.

They knew that the final scene made its effect by having three brides present. Since they could not remember how Shakespeare provided Hortensio with that other element of wiving it wealthily – the widow – they constructed the plot in which Kate had two sisters. They were aware that the comedy is controlled by a perpetual mistaking of roles: good servants are beaten, real fathers are denounced as impostors by supposed fathers conjured up at the insistence of genuine sons forced into counterfeiting by their desire to become true lovers – the brilliant box of comic tricks which Shakespeare had studied so carefully in Gascoigne's *Supposes*. They knew that the story of the shrew being tamed was part of a wider plot.

Christopher Sly emerges from the mists of folk-tale to an immortality of alcoholic amnesia. Convinced that he is a lord by being introduced to his lady, he is delayed from the consummation of his simple request to the boy-player, "Madam, undress you and come now to bed", by the announcement that his doctors have prescribed that he see a play as a suitable cure for his "melancholy". *The Taming of the Shrew*, like so many of Shakespeare's comic titles, is perfectly clear until it becomes clearly ambiguous. A basic and deeply felt male fantasy is presented in circumstances in which it cannot remotely be realized, Sly, whose personal habits excuse or extenuate almost any behaviour in his wife, is so evidently incapable of the brutal benevolence displayed by Shakespeare's shrew-tamer that his sudden and sodden attempt will clearly blunder him into a marital battering.

In *A Shrew* this framework begins and ends the play and Sly and the Lord exchange words on four other occasions. This joke, therefore, keeps valuable actors largely unused on stage throughout the play. It seems unlikely that actors adapting the text would have kept Sly if they had any licence to cut him. They were therefore accustomed to a version in which Sly played an important part. Either these Shakespearian features were dropped accidentally from the Folio text or they were cut from it. These several omissions can hardly be an accident of printing. They cannot be explained by difficulties of casting or staging since in that case they would not have been kept by the reporters. Someone thought the play would be better off without them. Oliver points to Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* as a contemporary example of an opening frame which needs no conclusion and suggests that Shakespeare came to feel the same way about *The Shrew*. The case for Shakespearian revision is a strong one. After *The Shrew* an audience may be allowed to make its own sly way home. It is a great pleasure to see sense so well established and so fortunately expressed as it is in this edition.

The editor of *Henry V*, Gary Taylor, also postulates authorial revision as the solution to a major editorial problem. There are two early texts – the Folio and Quarto printed in 1600 which has all the features of a memorial reconstruction. In both versions the King of France expressly commands the Dauphin to stay with the court at Rouen rather than join the army assembling to repel the English invasion. In the Folio the Dauphin is present at Agincourt, notably in the night scene in the French camp. In the Quarto his part, heavily cut, is spoken by the Duke of Bourbon. This changes the balance of both the scene and the play. The Dauphin's arrogance becomes a focus for the nasty but natural habit of fleering at foreigners, but the same lines, when spoken by the Duke of Bourbon, become part of an ironic pattern of conversation among men who are about to lose a battle they are all confident of winning. Taylor believes that there are good reasons for following the Quarto at this point. It has involved him in a major re-examination of the play and its place in Shakespeare's work.

Taylor published his evidence and reasoning in 1979 in *Three Studies in the Text of Henry V*. Those following the argument of the introduction will find that it leads them to that book on many occasions. In these complex circumstances this is unavoidable and it is fair to acknowledge that it here allows the editor space for consideration of the literary problems of a difficult play. Taylor's textual argument is, briefly, that the Folio text derives from Shakespeare's own manuscript while the Quarto was put together by two actors engaged in a performance for which only eleven actors were available. It is a garbled but not necessarily stolen version and it is a very different kind of text from *A Shrew*. As Taylor says:

> Q represents a transcript of the text of Shakespeare's play by two men whose living depended on their memories, and who had acted in *Henry V* within a year or so of its first performance. This makes Q an historical document of far more authority than the hypotheses of any twentieth century scholar.

The vital distinction is that error within the text of *A Shrew* is unpredictable. If Taylor's argument is correct then error in Q *Henry V* is, within limits, predictable. Most variations can be explained by casting difficulties or memorial error – but in cases where these are evidently not the explanation and where there are still vital differences between Quarto and Folio text we may conclude that the Quarto preserves for us a Shakespearian touch which has somehow been omitted from the Folio text. Taylor believes that the Quarto is an abridgement of a later version of the play than the Folio text and that some differences – the changes of Westmoreland to Warwick, Bedford to Clarence, and the omission of the Dauphin at Agincourt – are Shakespeare's sensible second thoughts.

This explanation, however reasonable, still leaves enormous editorial problems in 3.7 – the scene in the French camp before Agincourt. The Folio scene is much longer than the one reported in the Quarto. The shortness of the latter may be due to difficulties of reporting but it seems significant that what the Quarto leaves out are almost exactly the high-flown lines of boastful arrogance which make the Dauphin so admirably French a prince to English ears. If we are to have Bourbon rather than the Dauphin then the shorter, quicker scene of the Quarto is more theatrically effective.



Sir Henry Irving – a caricature by Harry Furniss from the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery reviewed on page 806.

Taylor leaves his Bourbon having to ride lines evidently written for the Dauphin and consequently gives him a most uneasy stage passage. The removal of these piles of arrogance seems a necessary consequence of Taylor's editorial diagnosis and he should have allowed himself more radical surgery.

The matter is still beyond absolute proof and we cannot be sure that Shakespeare revised his play in this way. It is the business of an editor to argue the case and alter, where he believes it necessary, a revered version of an almost sanctified text. It is to be hoped that a national company will soon consider putting it to the test of performance. They will find one proud boast in *Three Studies* fully justified in the edition:

> All editors do not clarify the play's confusion of French and English nobles producers will . . . Though theatrical solutions have often been wildly wrong they represent the honest attempts of laymen to cope with textual difficulties which the professionals should long ago have solved for them.

Taylor's argument is that there is, in effect, no existing text of *Henry V* and that an editor has to take on the task of reconstruction. It is almost impossible to attempt to clarify such problems without encouraging in the process the chaos of controversy. Any modern step must appear heavy-footed when Shakespeare is treading so softly on a nation's dreams.

Henry V is rare among Shakespearian plays in containing an exactly datable reference designed to appeal to the audience for other than dramatic reasons. The Chorus, speaking of Henry's return to England, says,

> Were now the General of our gracious Empress –
> As in good time he may – from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit
> To welcome him?

Elizabeth I had sent an expedition to Ireland under the command of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, to suppress a rising led by the Earl of Tyrone in 1599. Ireland continued to be the immovable object which proved that English force was not irresistible and Essex returned to England in September. He returned dispirited.

It is the elusive spirit of victory that Shakespeare defines so well in this play. "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers" – Nelson adopted it for his captains and Churchill adapted it for his fighter pilots – can still stir resolution in those who die for their country. Shakespeare is, however, interested in right and wrong and those who wish to present it either as a play for patriots or a paean for pacifists will have to cut Shakespeare's text. In a brilliant piece of literary criticism Taylor argues that Shakespeare's dramatic orchestration uses the drums of war to herald in the deadly argument of death: Henry, faced with a second attack, orders the killing of all French prisoners, as the English army is small and he cannot afford to allow any troops to be out of action guarding them. Shakespeare insists that this action should be presented on stage. The man who wins Agincourt is the same man – and arguably by necessity the same – as the man who casts off Falstaff, kills prisoners and connives in the judicial execution of his old companion Bardolph.

Taylor, however, does severe harm to one popular character. The point is worth raising because it concerns methods applicable to the whole series. In 2.1.3 we find that Ancient Pistol of the Folio has become Ensign Pistol. In his note the editor says that *OED* describes the form "ancient" as an amalgamation of the words "ensyne" and "ancyen" which, taken over from French, were confused in the process. It is more probably a conflation than a confusion since those responsible for protecting the colours are also charged with maintaining good order and military discipline – the honour of the regiment which, though it may appear a little out of fashion, is a matter of much care and valour in any army. In the sixteenth century, as the editor points out at 4.1.43, there was a clear distinction between "officers", who were professional soldiers, and "gentlemen", who were volunteers and not subject to normal military discipline. Pistol is clearly in the category of those who serve for pay but are unlikely to save the sum of things while earning it. Taylor himself brilliantly restores Shakespeare's handling of this matter since it is Pistol who has to throw away his expected fortune in ransom when he cuts the throat of his French gentleman prisoner

Military ranks still suffer from apparent confusions inherited from clear divisions of responsibility in this period. A major outranks a lieutenant but a lieutenant-general is superior to a major-general because historically the latter is a serjeant-major-general. It is not a modernization to change Ancient to Ensign. It introduces inappropriate notions of youthful Victorian chivalry and it spoils Shakespeare's joke. Pistol was created for a superb moment in 2 *Henry IV* 2.4. when he enters drunk while Falstaff is engaged with Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet. He rehearses noisily all the honorific terms of classical killing until Falstaff is forced to draw his sword and drive him downstairs. The Hostess actually calls him "Captain Peesel" and it is obvious enough that there is a pistol/pizzle switch in operation. Ancient Pistol is an old joke about those who have no longer the necessary flint to fire the gunpowder and are merely impotent where pistols, pizzles, or penises are concerned. The scenes in *Henry V* draw on this admirable joke with continual drawing of swords and swaggering statements which would be suicidal if any percentage were backed by action. Taylor is intellectually too sharp and rigorous not to have considered this question. He must therefore have rejected it as "impertinent" – a meaning not established for the period. *2 Henry IV* 2.4 seems to me to establish the meaning conclusively for the period and it is therefore "impertinent" to bowdlerize the lines in textual rather than moral fervour. May we please have our Ancient Pistol back?

It is a surprising decision since Taylor rightly lays such stress upon the importance of roles like Fluellen or Pistol in the play. Some of Shakespeare's warriors do make Agincourt a working day with room for chivalric courtesy. Shakespeare asks his audience to consider breeches, dead boys and the exfoliation of Bardolph's nose. The play spans too much human misery to be a patriotic success. Shakespeare is a true historian in the sense that Mark Twain imagined for Herodotus: "Many things do not happen as they ought, and the best things do not happen at all. It is the duty of the conscientious historian to correct these defects." There could be few better examples of such a conscientious historian at work than *Troilus and Cressida*.

It is a play destined for success. Whores and heroes are perennially popular. Taylor suggests that Shakespeare specifically cast doubt upon the heroism of Essex's enterprise in Ireland. When George Chapman began the lengthy task of translating Homer he dedicated his first *Seven Books of the Iliads of Homer* to Essex as "the most honoured now living instance of the Achillean virtues". Essex did not long survive such praise. Shakespeare shows us Achillean virtue in action – a ring of armed men surround a solitary soldier who has sheathed his sword and removed his own defensive armour. "Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain" is a line with an ironic ring never intended by Homer. Shakespeare, as Kenneth Muir shows, had read Chapman very carefully. It is also arguable that he knew some Homer. The differences are so deliberate that they seem the result of informed choice.

The characters exist in Homer but not in the version which Shakespeare tells does not come from the *Iliad* but from Caxton and Lydgate, who are relying upon Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Troiana* (1267). As Richard Proudfoot once admirably suggested, the received values of the play are those of Burgundian chivalry. The characters, however, are deliberately trapped by their authors in a situation where their commenti illuminate for the audience quite other considerations than the details that concern them. Troilus talks to Cressida of love, the heroes talk of fame, good order and military discipline. All operate in a context in which their own original actions have placed what they most desire in the world permanently beyond their grasp. Cressida and Pandarus watch the return of demigods in armour from the unforgiving war. The Greek camp hears ultimate wisdom: "Take but degree away, untune that string/And hark what discord follows." Yet in order to realize this truth Ulysses involves the Greek commanders in a devious plot which comes to nothing. Achilles returns to the battle because Patroclus has been killed and for no other reason. The Trojan princes debate the return of Helen in a scene in which the audience know that Hector, who says "Let Helen go", has already sent a chivalric challenge to the Greek camp. The arguments deployed by Troilus in favour of keeping Helen will inevitably deprive him of Cressida.

Her character is crucial to the play. As Muir points out, no one is inclined to laugh at the vows exchanged in Troy even though we know that

> When time is old and hath forgot itself,
> When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,
> And blind oblivion swallowed cities up,

Cressida will indeed be celebrated for falsehood. Shakespeare shows how this comes about. When Cressida arrives in the Greek camp Agamemnon salutes her with a kiss. Ulysses suggests: "'twere better she were kissed in general" and inaugurates the game in which she is kissed by every one of the Greek commanders. When it comes to his own turn he begs a kiss: "When Helen is a maid again, and his". The organizer of everyone else's kiss is the only one to refuse to kiss her himself. At the end of the scene he tells Nestor that these "encounterers, so glib of tongue" can only be regarded in one way:

> Set them down,
> For sluttish spoils of opportunity
> And daughters of the game.

One would indeed be unfortunate to be a daughter of any game devised on Ulysses' rules. The pleasure he has extracted from the attempt to humiliate Cressida hardly gives him the privilege of calling her a whore. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Thersites should describe the whole chivalric game of the Trojan war in similar terms: "All the argument is a whore and a cuckold – a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death on." There would be absolutely no point in such bitter indignation unless Thersites himself was part of Shakespeare's evidence for the possibility of a better world beyond the knowledge of the characters but within reach of the understanding of the audience. Cressida who lives by values more loving than those which would label her as a whore. It is totally typical of Shakespeare's art that he should transform the tragic story of Troilus and Cressida into one of the most powerful and imaginative of his comedies.

Heminge and Condell, however, classed it as a tragedy and intended to print it immediately after *Romeo and Juliet*. They were prevented from doing so because of difficulties about the ownership of the text. The title was entered in the Stationers' Register by James Roberts on February 7, 1603. Yet in 1609 it was both entered and printed by two other members of the Stationers' Company, Bonian and Walley. Their Quarto first appeared with a title-page advertising the play "As it was acted by the King's Majesties servants at the Globe". Their second title-page omitted this reference. They also included a preface which stated that this was "a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical". This would suggest a play written not for the public theatres but for some private occasion – a conclusion which is supported by the fact that it seems to be the only one of Shakespeare's plays where the author assumes that the audience knows the story already. It must be supposed that Walley, the surviving partner, disputed the right of Jaggard to print the play. It is evident that the printing had to be stopped, *Troilus* taken out, and *Timon of Athens* substituted in its place. In view of the difficulties that must have been caused – since the play had to be printed later and inserted into the book even after the Contents page had been printed – Heminge and Condell's remarks about those who had printed the Quarto texts seem mild and moderate.

Muir says that he has acted upon a thesis of Gary Taylor's that the Quarto was published from Shakespeare's manuscript and the Folio from the prompt book. This means that he accepts the Quarto as his "control text" for the edition although, as he says, the text is "inevitably eclectic". The difficulties can be seen in two variants discussed by E. A. J. Honigmann in his important book *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text*. The Quarto text is printed, the Folio variant given below it:

> I haue a roisting challenge sent amongst
> The dull and factious nobles of the Greekes,
> Will *strike* amazement to their drowsie spirits
> (2.2.208–10 Folio *strike*)
>
> They clap the lubber Ajax on the shoulder
> As if his foote were one braue Hectors breast,
> And great Troy shrinking.
> (3.3.139–41 Folio *shrinking*)

The interest of these passages is that they were set by different compositors in the printing of the Quarto. "Shrike", which means "shriek", survives as a spelling at 2.2.97 where the Folio prints "shreek", and seems to be a Shakespearian spelling (*Romeo* 4.3.47, 5.3.189 Q2 and R; *MND*. 1.2.68) not very common in 1609.

Honigmann comments, "those who throw out the Quarto variants therefore ask us to believe that a copyist or different compositors changed the text and produced an unusual spelling; a Shakespearian spelling, which both times makes excellent sense." Muir prefers the Folio in the first instance and the Quarto in the second. In both cases it seems that "shriek" produces an unusual effect which has been smoothed out to the commonplace. It seems odd not to read it both times when the Quarto is used as a "control". On the other hand the editor follows the Quarto text at

> And therefore is the glorious planet Sol,
> In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
> Amidst the other; whose med'cinable eye
> Corrects the influence of evil planets,
> (1.3.89–92)

where most modern editors have followed the Folio "Corrects the ill Aspects of Planets evill". Muir comments that both "readings were doubtless authorial" and it remains arguable whether Shakespeare put in or took out chiasmic order and alliteration.

The most difficult cases occur when both texts agree and the editor still feels that the text requires emendation. Muir himself proposes two fresh emendations and prints a number of passages in a textual appendix where the reading of Quarto and Folio are photographically reproduced. This is enormously helpful and one can only hope that the General Editor, and the Oxford University Press, can find space, time and money to make this a regular feature of the series. Kenneth Muir has been responsible for many editions of Shakespeare's plays. In this one he has given us easily the best modern edition of *Troilus and Cressida*.

The great strength of the *Oxford Shakespeare* is evidently its strong editorial team and deliberate policy. This particular reviewer sees problems developing if the "authorial revision" theory is applied without the care and meticulous attention to detail that is exhibited in these volumes. The General Editor, his associates, and the Oxford University Press deserve congratulation on a superb start to an enterprise of great importance to all who still speak the tongue that Shakespeare spoke.

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A study for a backdrop drawn by Edward Burra in 1933, which was offered for sale recently at Sotheby's.

Tragedy at a distance

Lachlan Mackinnon

LEE BLISS
The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama
246pp. Brighton: Harvester. £22.50.
0 7108 0505 5

In the first year of the seventeenth century two parallel dramatic forms, both hybrids, came into being. One is tragicomedy, as exemplified by *The Malcontent*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* and *Measure for Measure*. More useful than seeing this as city comedy, aimed at chastising contemporary vices, is to see it as a form which distances us from its content and prevents the engagement of our sympathies. So, in *Measure for Measure*, the Duke can only escape his exclusion as observer by implicating himself in the play he has made, and what purports to be a moral conclusion looks dangerously like an act of will. The form deliberately raises questions it cannot answer, as does the second new kind, one of tragedy, seen in *Bussy D'Ambois*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. Here, the heroes are distanced from us by being shown against contexts that diminish their claims to greatness and that subject them to the imputations of farce. Coriolanus is, as Shaw observed, a comic creation.

Such is the historical background against which Lee Bliss, in *The World's Perspective*, wants us to see Webster. It suffers from the suggestion that interrogation of the tragic hero by comedy is something new, when it can be seen in Marlowe as much as in Shakespeare, and from the suggestion that distancing effects are wholly novel when they play such an important part in *The Spanish Tragedy*. We make a mistake ever to underestimate the wit of a theatrical audience. However, Shakespeare is unusual in the degree to which he permits formal interpenetration throughout his career, and ironic tragi-comedy of the kind cited does represent something new: the first of Bliss's categories, ironic tragicomedy, stands on firmer ground, and is indeed the one she finds most useful in her detailed readings of *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Devil's Law-Case*.

Bliss's argument is that Webster's dramatic techniques here derive from the slightly earlier theatrical revolution in which he had taken part as a collaborator, and she goes a long way towards explaining Webster's plays as formal contraptions. In *The White Devil*, Francisco's emergence to dominate the close of the play is the triumph of the Machiavellian politician, whose victory empties moral forms of any intrinsic worth. This is in keeping with the tone of the play, which renders a moral figure such as Cornelia irrelevant and boring, and explains the proximity of farce. What ought to be tragic becomes accelerated and absurd, and in such a diminished moral universe the characters are capable of only fragments of insight before they perish. Flamineo and Vittoria are at least capable of learning that they have been wrong, and that alone is enough to make us regret their deaths. Their comic pursuit of worldly goods reveals a tragic potential, and in a sense what Webster has done is to invert tragicomedy so that comic beginnings come to tragic ends.

The same holds for *The Duchess of Malfi*, where the Duchess pursues the goods of comedy, marriage and a private life. Her early death is, like Antony's, a direct consequence of what is seen as folly – more clearly so, in her case – but as we watch her through Bosola we see that she did represent a value because of the effect she has on him. The trickster discovers the hollowness of his vocation as he retires into the last act's "farcical treatment of tragic motifs". In *The Devil's Law-Case*, the comic dénouement is "precarious and clearly provisional". Again, morality refuses to be imposed and waits to be discovered.

Webster's plays, then, intimate the validation of "unheroic gropings, vacillating commitment, and temporal failure" which his characters share with Antony or Cleopatra. However, their triumphs are hardly triumphs, only muted and debased versions of a grandeur they look back to as the pairings of ironic tragicomedy recall and cannot live up to those of romantic comedy. Webster affirms mutual commitment, but with a sense of its being against the odds. It is a pity that more is not made of Coriolanus, whose rapprochement with his mother is proper but hideously mistimed, being trashed so fast by what follows that its value escapes us.

To complain is only to carp, though: this is a profoundly stimulating and exciting book. It reads with great dash and is well buttressed with learning. Dramatic genre theory in this period is a difficult area because often it must depend on perceived similarities rather than manifest borrowing, but this author shows the necessary perceptiveness. She makes Webster more moralistic than his seedy dramatic world justifies, and underestimates his admiration for sheer endurance and his fascination with the display of suffering – both at their sharpest in the exposure of the Duchess to the madmen – but she offers a useful and provocative way of thinking about him and more widely about the Jacobean drama.

Autocrat at work

Marcy Kahan

DAVID SELBOURNE
The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream
327pp. Methuen. £15.
0 413 49720 8

In the summer of 1970, Peter Brook invited David Selbourne, an aspiring playwright, to watch his rehearsals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Stratford. The resulting production, one of the most famous of the century, was praised by critics for its "radiant innocence", sexual energy, and magical effects, and acclaimed by audiences in Britain, North America, Japan and Australia. David Selbourne, however, was neither impressed nor inspired by what he had witnessed, rejecting Brook's experiment as "privileged theatre for the privileged, the work of an autocrat with exploited actors, a pseudo-intellectual form of show biz . . .". Ten years later, he has reconsidered this dogmatic judgment, and has decided to publish this private journal, "an eye-witness account of the production from first rehearsal to first night".

While doing full descriptive justice to Brook's ideas and innovations, Selbourne has not censored his youthful misgivings and doubts. He is an uncomfortable voyeur – dismayed by Brook's adroit evasion of possible political meanings in the encounter between courtiers and mechanicals, and refreshingly sceptical of the validity of Brook's experiments "to enter the world of pre-verbal vibrations". He is especially aware of the vulnerability of the actors, who are frequently portrayed as mute but well-meaning circus acrobats, confronted by an impatient and cerebral ringmaster.

At times, Selbourne's critical spirit becomes obtrusive, a compulsive form of devil's advocacy, or presumptuous, as he attempts to read the actors' thoughts from their faces. But his gifts as an observer redeem these faults, in particular his detailed evocations of special moments of discovery in rehearsal. In spite of his reiterated ambivalence and estrangement, he manages to convey the excitement and frustrations inherent in any collective search for excellence. His journal takes its overdue place beside A. C. H. Smith's *Orghast in Persepolis* and John Heilpern's *Conference of the Birds*, representing a controversial portrait of the enigmatic Peter Brook at work.

Taking to the streets

Betty Wood

RUTH ROSEN
The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918
245pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £14.75.
0 8018 2664 0

Of the many themes and problems pertaining to the history of American women that have attracted scholarly attention in recent years, none is more emotive, or has been so partially researched, as prostitution. On both counts Ruth Rosen's sober, and richly documented, study is to be warmly welcomed. This sophisticated analysis may not put an end to the disagreement between feminists as to whether prostitution is "the quintessential exploitation of women in a patriarchal society" or, conversely, "an occupation which frees women from family oppression or economic subservience", but it must surely give the members of both camps considerable food for thought.

Rosen believes, and rightly, that neither of these perspectives satisfactorily explains what in fact was an immensely complicated aspect of the social, economic and cultural life of industrial America. Her concern is to produce a fully-rounded account of urban prostitution during the Progressive Era and to this end she focuses her attention on two hitherto neglected themes: contemporary critiques of prostitution and the perceptions of those women who, for whatever reason, plied that particular trade. But her first, and arguably most difficult, task is to plot the growth of urban prostitution.

The fact that prostitutes were seldom identified as such in governmental or other official records – in itself a revealing insight into contemporary attitudes – makes it virtually impossible to determine how many women, in which localities, were engaged in prostitution at any one time. But although unsatisfactory, the available evidence indicates that prostitution increased quite dramatically during the course of the nineteenth century and, as Rosen suggests, probably reached its peak between 1850 and 1900.

As in Britain and Europe, its growth was linked directly to the economic and social changes wrought by the twin processes of urbanization and industrialization. The rapid industrial growth of the post-Civil War years had profound consequences for both the structure of, and the value system which underpinned, the American family. In the present context, however, the most significant of these consequences, not least for those who occupied the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder, was a fundamental re-shaping of the traditional, family-based economic role of women. With the growth of industrialization, increasing numbers of lower-class women were forced out of what Rosen regards as the protective, rather than the oppressive, sphere of the family into an urban labour market where they were confronted by the prospect of ruthless economic and sexual exploitation. For many of these women prostitution was, to use Rosen's terminology, one of the few viable "survival strategies".

Taking her cue as much from the "new Social History" as from the recent flurry of interest in the history of women, Rosen devotes much of her book to an absorbing discussion of a question previously ignored or regarded as impossible to answer: how did prostitutes themselves perceive their situation?

Many of the standard texts on the social history of nineteenth-century America, or those that bother to mention prostitution at all, give the impression that, if not exactly invisible, prostitutes were inarticulate, that their motives and perceptions, the world which they inhabited, can be recreated only through the eyes of others and more often than not, through those of their sternest critics or would-be saviours. But as Rosen and Sue Davidson have already demonstrated in their *Maimie Papers* (1977), nothing could be further from the truth.

Some prostitutes left letters and memoirs from which it is possible to reconstruct their world from their own standpoint; many others supplied information to those middle-class reformers who periodically "investigated" prostitution and, during the Progressive Era, to the recently established municipal vice commissions. But as Rosen admits, the authenticity and objectivity of these data are open to precisely the same type of criticism as that sometimes levelled against the "ex-slave narratives" of the 1930s. However, she is well aware of the methodological problems they pose and employs them most judiciously. Moreover, and quite refreshingly, she resists the temptation to use them as the basis of an account which depicts, and seeks to explain, urban prostitution in sets of graphs and statistical correlations.

What emerges from Rosen's thoughtful and eminently readable analysis is a fascinating picture of the previously unexplored subculture of urban prostitution. Perhaps her most significant, and potentially most provocative, finding is that many prostitutes – she suspects the majority – did not see themselves as helpless or hapless victims in need of rescue. They often claimed that prostitution was an "easier" way of life than the alternatives of factory-employment or domestic drudgery. In no sense did they regard themselves as a "Lost Sisterhood", as women who had been coerced or hoodwinked into prostitution and who thereby posed a potent threat to the moral and social fabric of American life. Words such as "remorse", "guilt", and "rage" seem not to have featured prominently in their vocabulary. But as Rosen points out in what comprises her second main theme, this self-perception was at odds with, and by the turn of the nineteenth-century diametrically opposed to, the view of prostitution and prostitutes held by most reformers.

Whereas previous historians have usually been content simply to identify prostitution as just one of the social "problems" which so troubled nineteenth-century American reformers, Rosen argues that attitudes towards prostitution changed dramatically, and with dire consequences, during the Progressive Era. Now, for the first time, reformers became determined to eradicate it.

Previous reformers, beginning with the zealots of the second Great Awakening, had argued on moral and religious grounds that prostitution posed a threat to American manners and morals. Down to the late nineteenth century they employed various devices, including the periodic harassment of prostitutes and on at least one occasion publication of the names of men who visited New York brothels, in an attempt to limit and control prostitution. But although they held it to be morally and socially undesirable, privately they recognized that prostitution was "necessary" and that the best they could hope to achieve was the removal of the "oldest profession" from the sight, and temptation, of the middle-class.

Progressive reformers, on the other hand, identified prostitution not as a "necessary evil" but as a "Social Evil" which, as Rosen puts it, "symbolized the shaky state of the nation's soul". Greatly alarmed by the growth of urban prostitution, they sought not regulation but abolition. As with the rest of their social programme, this was seen as a task demanding the active involvement of government. Between 1900 and 1918 municipal governments especially were persuaded to launch what amounted to a remorseless nationwide crusade against prostitution. But as Rosen convincingly argues, it was a crusade which, like so many other Progressive campaigns, backfired and produced entirely the opposite result to that intended.

Not least because of the closing down of the previously tolerated red-light districts and the passage of laws which made it a criminal offence, prostitution was driven "underground", where it became more closely yoked to liquor, drugs, theft and increased violence". Ironically, by the remedies they proposed, and the attitudes they fostered, in the longer term the Progressives succeeded only in creating a different, but equally intractable, set of social "problems".

Rosen has broken entirely new ground in what will surely remain the definitive study of urban prostitution in America for many years to come. No doubt some will take issue with her contention that although "dangerous and degrading" to women, prostitution "has enabled thousands of women to escape even worse danger and deprivation". Yet this is a perfectly tenable argument and one which is supported by Rosen's admirably thorough, and above all objective, examination of the evidence. Indeed, it is greatly to her credit that she makes no attempt to squeeze the evidence into a pre-determined or rigid ideological mould. Hers is an approach which explains, and puts into proper perspective, the experience of a great many women in an urbanizing and industrializing United States. In Ruth Rosen these women, despised or pitied by their contemporaries, and not least by other women, and for so long ignored by scholars, have at last found their historian, and a most perceptive historian at that.

Caring for the bodies

Thomas McKeown

ANTHONY WOHL
Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain
440pp. Dent. £17.50.
0 460 04252 1

The history of public health in Victorian Britain could hardly be described, in the words of the schoolboy's essay, as "virgin field, pregnant with opportunity", so it is surprising that Anthony Wohl should introduce his book with the assertion that "countless articles and books have been written on the Victorian mind but relatively few on the Victorian body". There is a large literature – narrative, descriptive, and analytical – concerned with health and disease in the nineteenth century, and much of it is cited in the extensive bibliography appended to *Endangered Lives*. Indeed it is the merit of the book that although it has no new evidence or novel conclusions it brings together a large quantity of material, some of which hitherto has not been readily available.

The nineteenth century is arguably the most significant period in medical history. It was the time when industrialization transformed conditions of life, with profound consequences for health and population growth; when clinical medicine first became really effective; when it was accepted, after a long debate, that ill-health was largely due to environmental conditions which could be controlled; and when the most important measures ever taken to protect health – improvements in food and hygiene and limitation of numbers – were introduced. Moreover, there are good reasons for Wohl's decision to focus attention on the period of Victoria. She came to the throne just before births, deaths and cause of death were first registered nationally (in 1838), so from that time it is possible to analyse health problems without reliance on the treacherous evidence from parish registers. She died soon after the end of the century, when the predominant causes of death were changing from the infections to the non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancer, accidents and the like). A discussion of public health in the Victorian period is therefore essentially an assessment of the immediate effects of industrialization on health, and it can be made, for the first time in history, on the basis of reasonably reliable evidence.

Professor Wohl considers in turn most of the traditional themes which have been the concern of public health workers: infant mortality; infectious diseases; sewage and refuse disposal; atmospheric and river pollution; industrial diseases; housing. Although the approach is essentially descriptive he has interesting things to say about the impulse for sanitary reform and the limitations which became increasingly apparent in the last years of the century. "For the Victorians, public health, like so many other social reforms and endeavours, took on the form of a moral crusade. To most Victorians, epidemics were not the scourges sent by God to punish man for his sins, but were the consequences of man's sinful neglect of God's earth and of his injunction to care for the sick and weak. . . . There could be no moral, religious or intellectual improvement without physical improvement."

The early reformers did indeed believe that good health could be achieved by specific hygienic measures, but later there were doubts. In spite of advances in other age groups, infant mortality did not fall before 1900, and a high proportion of volunteers for military service in the Boer War were judged unfit. Remarkably, some people attributed such findings to advances in health previously made, and Wohl quotes a medical observer, by no means atypical, who argued that "I do not see how we can shirk the fact that preventive medicine and civilization between them have already deteriorated in a marked degree the healthy vigour of our race. . . . Preventive medicine is trying a unique experiment, and the effect is already discernible – race-decay." But a reason for more enduring concern was recognition that the causes of ill-health were rooted in poverty, whose elimination was beyond the resources, and indeed beyond the aims of most sanitary reformers. Simon, the wisest and most experienced medical observer, concluded that "the masses will scarcely be healthy unless, to their very base, they be at least moderately prosperous." It is a conclusion which has found an echo in recent discussions of the health inequalities which still exist.

Professor Wohl touches at several points on what is perhaps the most important medical issue in the nineteenth century; the reason for the reduction of infectious deaths. His references to the standard of living and to improvement in nutrition, which I believe was the most important influence, are not altogether consistent. He states that "the assumption that the second half of the century witnessed an 'indisputable rise' in living standards must now be modified", and a little later, that "over the nation as a whole living standards rose in the second half of the nineteenth century." He recognizes that "the consequences of poverty are most apparent in the diets of the poor", and concludes that "it was not until the last quarter of the century that the working man's diet improved significantly." If this were true we would still be without an explanation of the substantial decline in mortality; we would also have to explain why large numbers of people left Goldsmith's idyllic village for Engels's industrial town, if not because with urban employment they were more adequately fed. Indeed Wohl is under no illusions about the extent and consequences of poverty in rural areas. "Industry, whatever the social and environmental ills to which it gave birth, provided jobs, higher living standards, employment for the entire family, and ultimately the exports which enabled England to pay for the imported food which was so essential to its health."

With a large subject it is not surprising that there are some minor errors but a few are more serious. Smallpox was associated with one-twentieth – not twenty per cent – of the reduction of mortality in the nineteenth century, and vaccination was probably not the main reason for the decline of the disease. The virulence of scarlet fever was not attributable to "the generally low standard of nutrition and therefore lowered resistance"; it is the outstanding example of an infection whose fluctuations in virulence appear to be determined by changes in the relation between host and parasite. It is questionable that improved standards of personal hygiene contributed substantially to the decline of tuberculosis, or indeed of any other infection. Contrary to general belief, tuberculosis, unlike measles, is not a highly infectious disease, as is evident from the fact that only a small proportion of wives of infectious husbands were themselves affected.

Fenwomen: A Portrait of Women in an English Village by Mary Chamberlain has recently been reissued by Routledge and Kegan Paul (186pp. Paperback, £4.95. 0 7100 9567 8). The book, published originally by Virago in 1975, is a social and oral history and spans (from memory at least) some hundred and fifty years. In the preface to this new edition Ms Chamberlain says: "I wanted the women's stories to stand as extracts from life histories . . . which interact with each other and are located within a time and a place."

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Once more unto the text

Nigel Alexander on the first three volumes of the Oxford Shakespeare

H. J. OLIVER (Editor)
The Taming of the Shrew
248pp. 0 19 812907 6.

GARY TAYLOR (Editor)
Henry V
330pp. 0 19 812912 2.

KENNETH MUIR (Editor)
Troilus and Cressida
205pp. 0 19 812903 3.
Oxford University Press. £9.50 each.

A recent television biography of Lord Olivier contained some instructive comment on his film of *Hamlet*. The narrative voice-over expressed the opinion that the director had chosen to make it in black and white because he "saw the play as an etching rather than a painting". Olivier shook his head over such an old tale; the truth was that he was having a financial dispute with Technicolor at the time.

The commercial constraints surrounding dramatic productions have not much changed since William Shakespeare, John Heminge and Henry Condell were professionals working in a difficult market. Heminge and Condell, Shakespeare's fellow actors and friends, collected his plays after his death and, in association with a number of publishers including William and Isaac Jaggard, printed them in 1623 in the volume called *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*. Their book is our sole authority for sixteen plays, including *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. We owe them more than the praise normally paid to dead friends or famous men.

Obviously they, and the publishers, felt that the book would sell. This mixture of reverence for Shakespeare's works with an acute appreciation of their continuing commercial possibilities is still the driving force behind the endless succession of modern editions – *The Arden*, *The New Arden*, *The Cambridge*, *The New Cambridge* with an even newer *Cambridge* now in preparation, *The Kittredge*, *The Revised Kittredge*, *The Alexander*, *The Penguin*, *The Pelican*, *The New Penguin*, *The Signet*, *The Riverside*, and now the first three volumes of *The Oxford Shakespeare*. It has been a long time in gestation. R. B. McKerrow's *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* was published in 1939. The project lapsed for a time at his death, was then continued under the guidance of a succession of distinguished scholars, but the problems proved too formidable for individual effort. In 1978 the Oxford University Press established a Shakespeare Department and appointed Stanley Wells as its head and General Editor of a series of projected Oxford editions.

In 1979 Dr Wells published a preliminary study called *Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling*. There he pointed out that the French town of Marseilles requires to be pronounced as three syllables in *The Taming of the Shrew* 2.1.367 and in *All's Well That Ends Well* 4.4.9–10. It also occurs in *All's Well* in a prose passage where syllabic pronunciation may be less certain. The 1623 Folio spells it as "Marcellus" in *The Shrew* and the prose passage in *All's Well*. It varies it to "Marcellae" in *All's Well*'s verse – although this could be a printing error. How is a modern editor to spell the word to convey sense and trisyllabic pronunciation to a modern performer? H. J. Oliver, editing *The Taming of the Shrew*, spells it "Marcellus" and has a footnote. Wells thought the spelling "Marsellus" most acceptable but commented:

> If no solution seems wholly satisfactory, one can only point to this as the kind of triviality over which editors agonize, changing their minds several times a day, rising from their beds to change it again, and telegraphing yet another vacillation to their sub-editors even after they have returned their final proofs. It is such anxieties, more perhaps even than major textual crux[es]; that drive an editor to a state of impotent neurosis, or drink, or an early grave. The tossing of a coin at an early stage after all the pros and cons have been weighed, with a firm resolution to abide by its decision, may avert these calamities.

Only those who have never known the laborious delights of editing will scorn such grave anxieties or believe that Wells delivers more or less than truth. But is neurotic coin-tossing really necessary? Do we need new and yet newer editions? Should we not simply retire with our *Knight's Cabinet Shakespeare* and study the plays?

The question is partly answered by these new volumes. They are easy to handle, beautifully printed, clear to read and an unacknowledged genius has solved the problem of printing footnotes so that they can be understood and read with pleasure. Any student of Shakespeare is bound to be grateful to those who have so simplified his task. The first three volumes are already sufficient evidence that the series is a triumph of editorial planning. Wells was clearly right to make his first priority a rigorous attempt to modernize the spelling. Of course there are difficulties – but they have been consciously faced and some attempt made to provide consistent answers. One of the results has been a close attention to Shakespeare's language, which is reflected in the quality of the footnotes. It also enforces an essential distinction "between actual emendations (departures from what the documents testify that Shakespeare wrote) and mere modernizations (interpretations of what Shakespeare meant by what the documents testify that he wrote)". This, as Gary Taylor points out in his introduction to *Henry V*, becomes particularly important when the language employed is not English but French. Also, by accident or design, the first three plays all present particularly difficult textual problems and the attentive reader of the introductions and commentary can gain an education in modern editorial procedures which it seems reasonable to assume will be applied throughout the series. The advantage of these procedures is not simply a better text but a new conception of Shakespeare. This is a major achievement of twentieth-century scholarship. A conscious editorial decision seems to have been taken to synthesize the labours of many scholars, extend their results wherever possible and then apply these principles consistently to the production of a new edition. The list of editors and advisers contains many distinguished names and all have no doubt made their contribution, but the controlling concept must surely be directly attributed to the wisdom and imagination of the General Editor. The volumes under review reveal the extreme difficulty of his task.

Anyone who sets out to print the plays of Shakespeare is automatically conscripted into exercising an editorial function. Horatio asks his comrades to watch the morn walk "o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill" – or does he say "Eastern"? Ophelia compares Hamlet's mind to sweet bells jangled – but are they "out of time and harsh" or "out of tune and harsh"? Does Othello compare himself to the base Indian who threw a pearl away – or was it a Judean? At the very least it has to matter to an actor who has to say one version and not another on stage. Or, of course, he may not find himself on stage at all. Most people who have seen *Henry V* will remember the boastful behaviour of the Dauphin on the night before Agincourt. They will look for his presence in vain in Dr Taylor's edition. These are not trivialities but significant questions, since the answers will affect the way we regard a play and alter our appreciation of the working methods of the dramatist.

We cannot determine these matters by referring to Shakespeare's manuscripts since there are only three pages of dramatic script doubtfully believed to be in his handwriting in existence. We have to depend upon the earliest printed editions and they were produced under economic constraints which have influenced the character and reliability of the text. In their address "To the great Variety of Readers" Heminge and Condell gave a modest account of their achievement:

> It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain to have collected and published them; and so to have published them as where before you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious imposters that exposed them; even those are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest absolute in their numbers as he conceived them.

Twenty of Shakespeare's plays had already appeared in print. Some plays – *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* are examples – were printed more than once. These versions differ from each other and from the text of 1623 – sometimes in radical fashion. In *Troilus and Cressida* Kenneth Muir points out that there are more than 5,000 differences between the Quarto text of 1609 and the Folio. Most concern spelling or punctuation but there are about 500 substantive differences and in many cases Professor Muir prefers the reading of the Quarto. The difficulty lies in the language. It looks as if Heminge and Condell are condemning all the early texts. Consequently when it appears that some Quartos preserve good texts – as for example the second Quarto of *Hamlet* printed in 1604–5 – then the Folio text itself obviously fails under suspicion. Yet modern criticism does distinguish three kinds of text which do correspond exactly to the words used in the address – "stolen", "surreptitious" and "injurious imposters". There are good texts of Shakespeare which get printed and which Heminge and Condell might rightly have regarded as stolen; there are texts which are surreptitiously put together by those who seem to have had access to the play but not to a manuscript of it; and there are texts which carry Shakespearian titles and yet have little to do with Shakespeare. These divergences and differences – the continuous concern of editors – are to some extent the result of political and commercial factors governing publishing and performance.

It is the lack of legal protection, of modern copyright, which explains the peculiar features of some dramatic texts of the period. An acting company was a cooperative endeavour in which the leading actors took a share of the profits while the more minor roles were played by "hired men" on a fixed wage. The sharers might become rich – Shakespeare was a sharer and able to buy a substantial house in Stratford and retire to it – but the hired men were likely to remain poor. So were the playwrights. Performing plays is evidently expensive, while writing them only seems to require paper, pen, ink and maybe a mind. Once he had written a play the author sold it to an acting company for a fixed sum. It became their property and he had no further financial interest in it – unless for some reason called on by the company to revise it. He had no financial incentive for taking the trouble to get it into print. The actors, on the other hand, had every reason for keeping it out of print. Their playbooks, like their costumes, were their chief capital. In the absence of copyright a play in print could be performed by any company that chose to do so.

There is therefore a fundamental division of financial interest. A popular play creates a demand for a text which, despite the company's denial, the Stationers are more than anxious to supply. It seems that on occasion hired men were prepared to help them by putting together what they could remember of their own parts and what they had heard on stage. The 1603 Quarto of *Hamlet* contains the immortal line, "To be or not to be, aye, there's the point", but it shows a remarkable grasp of the opening when Marcellus and Barnardo, presumably played by "hired men", happen to be on stage. Consequently the company thought it worth while to replace this garbled version with a text closer to that played at the Globe.

This distinction was first made by A. W. Pollard in *Shakespeare's Folios and Quartos* (1909), where he argued that "stolen and surreptitious copies" must refer to a group of Quartos which he identified as having some irregularity in their entry in the Stationers' Company Register and which were demonstrably not used as copy for the Folio. The argument is no longer regarded as valid, but the basic group of identified Quartos, Q1 *Romeo and Juliet*, Q1 *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Pericles* still hangs together because of the vital contribution of W. W. Greg, who in 1910 suggested that the peculiarities of the text of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* could be explained by reconstruction from memory. He strengthened the case to a reasonable proof in 1922. In 1929 Peter Alexander argued that the plays called *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* were not "earlier plays" but memorial reconstructions of the second and third parts of *Henry VI*. He then went on to suggest that the 1594 Quarto of the play called *The Taming of A Shrew* was also a memorial reconstruction of Shakespeare's play.

It is this last argument which is expanded, developed and turned into virtual certainty by H. J. Oliver in this new Oxford edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*. It may seem a minor matter whether these plays were put together by actors from the work of an already popular and successful dramatist or whether they were plays already in existence which Shakespeare reworked. It is, however, of great importance since it allows us to use the firm factual foundation provided by modern scholarship to change absurd attitudes about Shakespeare which have been held for centuries. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a crucial text in the understanding of Shakespeare's art.

The play called *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The taming of a Shrew* was published in 1594. The similarity between the titles makes distinction difficult for the reader but there seems no greater aid to clarity than the modern scholarly convention of referring to the quarto of 1594 as *A Shrew* and the Folio text of 1623 as *The Shrew*. As Oliver says, it now seems "inevitable that for hundreds of years *A Shrew* being the first of two versions of the story to be published, and being clearly inferior, should have been assumed to have been the first composed". Oliver's method is basically that followed by Hickson, Duthie and other scholars. He chooses a number of parallel passages in both texts and shows that what appears in the Quarto only makes sense in the light of the Folio text. Ferando in *A Shrew* and Petruchio in *The Shrew* both have a soliloquy in which they explain their method of "taming" to the audience. Ferando says

> This humour must I hold me to awhile,
> To bridle and hold back my headstrong wife,
> With curbs of hunger, ease, and want of sleep.
> Nor sleep nor meat shall she enjoy tonight,
> If I mew her up as men do mew their hawks,
> And make her gently come unto the lure.
> Were she as stubborn or as full of strength
> As were the Thracian horse Alcides tamed,
> That King Egeus fed with flesh of men,
> Yet would I pull her down and make her come,
> As hungry hawks do fly unto their lure.

Petruchio also compares his conduct to the training of a hawk – keeping it hungry until it learns to come back to the lure, used for recovery of the bird after free flight. It is also a practice in falconry to keep birds that show a tendency to "flap about" awake until they calm down and are docile. It is arguable whether this is a proper way to treat a wife but it does seem to be effective with birds.

The author of the passage in *A Shrew* seems to misunderstand the hawking imagery. Hawks are mewed up in the moulting season. It has nothing specific to do with training them. He also mixes the metaphor with the much more commonplace one of women as horses to be bridled and ridden. The man-eating Thracian horses, tamed by Hercules, are then borrowed from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and made into rather less than mighty lines.

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Ever since Lewis J. Brandt's "Some Notes on English Freudian Terminology" appeared in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* twenty-two years ago, there have been rumblings and grumblings about the inadequacy of English translations of Freud – even those included in the Standard Edition, undertaken to remedy defects in the pioneering versions of A. A. Brill and others.

Bruno Bettelheim's new book is the most powerful blast yet, and its reverberations will not soon die away. Much of his attack is clearly justified. The translators' tendency to substitute medical terms for words in ordinary use, their coinage of rebarbative terms like "parapraxis" and "cathexis" as the equivalent of words like "Fehleistung" and "Besetzung" which can easily be understood by Germans who are not specialists in psychoanalysis, deserve the strictures Bettelheim passes upon them – though whether his counter-suggestion "faulty achievement" would convey to English readers what "Fehleistung" suggests to German ones remains a moot point. He is right to object to the elimination of the personal element from Freud's style when the clause, "den ich als 'Verleugnung' bezeichnen möchte" is transmogrified into "which might be described as 'denial'"; when he tells us that "Group Psychology" is not at all the same thing as "Massenpsychologie"; or when he objects to the elimination of a vital distinction between "instincts" and "drives" where Freud's term "Trieb" is translated by "instinct".

He is right, above all, when he protests at the translators' ideologically motivated determination to eliminate the notion of the human soul from Freud's writings – a notion which is, after all, clearly enshrined in the very name "psychoanalysis". Freud's English translators, Bettelheim shows, have transformed "das seelischen Apparats" into "mental apparatus" and "die Wissenschaft vom Seelenleben" into "the science of mental life"; they have even rendered "Psyche ist ein griechisches Wort und lautet in deutscher Übersetzung Seele" as "'Psyche' is a Greek word which may be translated 'mind'". Bettelheim rightly objects to such high-handed, ideologically suspect procedures, and adduces sufficient quotations to prove beyond doubt that Freud wanted and needed the emotional and historical resonances of "Seele", the secularized term he habitually used to denote the inmost essence of the human personality. Those who deprived his work of these resonances, Bettelheim feels, are the same men as those who sought to make psychoanalysis the province of physicians rather than that of the secular *Seelsorger*. Freud envisaged in *The Question of Lay Analysis* and in his famous letter to Oskar Pfister about *The Future of an Illusion*. There is enough substance in these contentions to warrant the speedy appointment of a committee charged with the scrutiny and revision of the English Standard Edition.

Such a committee should beware, however, of taking Bettelheim's advice on individual corrections, or of trusting his divagations on the nuances of Freud's German and the translators' English, without examining them very carefully indeed. He makes some truly astonishing assertions in this short book. He tells us, for instance, that English readers of Freud are likely to be "thrown off by the fact that in English the accent in 'psychoanalysis' is on 'analysis', thus emphasizing the part of the word whose connotations are scientific", while "with the German word *Psychoanalyse* . . . the accent is on the first syllable – on 'psyche', the soul". But this is simply not so. In English there is a subsidiary stress on "psycho" and a principal stress on "analysis"; in German, as a glance into *Duden* will reveal, the principal stress is firmly on the penultimate syllable, towards which the rhythm of the word arises. "Psychoanalyse". If anything, therefore, the stress of the scientific component is stronger in Freud's original term than in its English equivalent.

Or take Bettelheim's very first example of the way in which the translators, in his opinion, miss the finer nuances of Freud's prose. In his late memoir entitled, in English, "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis", Freud tells us "dass mich die Erinnerung an das Erlebnis auf der Akropolis so oft heimsucht". "Maria [sic] Heimsuchung", Bettelheim explains, is a holiday celebrating the visit of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth which was fervently celebrated in Catholic Austria and whose commemorated incident Freud knew from many a work of art. Therefore, Bettelheim tells us, the Standard Edition's translation ". . . that the recollection of this incident on the Acropolis should have *troubled* me so often" uses an indefensible verb; Freud "said nothing of the sort, remarking merely that it *visited* him often". But unless the translation makes clear that the noun corresponding to the verb "to visit" is not "visit" but "visitation", the Standard Edition's "troubled" seems to me preferable to Bettelheim's emendation. "Heimsuchen" is the verb Luther's Bible uses as its equivalent for God's "visiting" the sins of the fathers on future generations; and any appropriate German dictionary will furnish plenty of examples in which "heimsuchen" has to do with "smiting", "afflicting", "being stricken", and "suffering", as well as "being favoured with benefits". In no way is it the equivalent of "besuchen", the ordinary term for "to visit". There *is* something troubling about the sudden irruption, the "Auftauchen", of this memory-image; and the Standard Edition's translators have, in my opinion, recognized this more clearly than their critic. What might indeed be questioned in their rendering of this passage – their translation of "Erlebnis" as "incident" rather than "experience" – seems to have escaped Bettelheim's notice.

Objecting to the term "scoptophilia" as an English equivalent of Freud's "Schaulust", Bettelheim informs his readers that the latter "*combines* the German word for lust, or sexual desire, with that for looking, viewing". What he fails to point out, however, is that the German word for "Lust" is by no means as firmly tied to sexual connotations as its English cognate. When I use it in German sentences which mean "I don't feel like seeing this film", "I feel like going for a walk", "I don't fancy eating anything just now", even a convinced Freudian is unlikely to discover sexual charges in the first two instances, though he might make some libidinous connection in the last. That, surely, is one of the essential differences between German "Lust haben" and English "lusting".

Like others before him, Bettelheim objects, with good reason, to the translation of Freud's "Ich" as "Ego", and "Es" as "Id". This, he rightly complains, substitutes cold technical terms for the master's deliberately simple ones: "To mistranslate *Ich* as 'ego' is to transform it into a jargon that no longer conveys the personal commitment we make when we say 'I' or 'me' . . . . An introspective commitment is made into a behavioural one which observes from the outside". "The I", Bettelheim suggests, or in certain contexts "the me", should do duty for "das Ich", and "the it" for "das Es". Then he comes to the third term of the Freudian Trinity: and here he suggests "the Upper-I" or "The Above-I" for "das Über-Ich". But why not "Super-I"? Bettelheim fails, I think, to appreciate that a Latinate prefix does not sound as "alien" in English as it does in German, and that if "das Über-Ich" suggests something which raises the potentialities of the I to a "higher" level and then lords it over the I, something analogous to "superman" would do very well. After all, no one would dream of translating Nietzsche's "Übermensch" – to which Freud's term alludes – as "upperman" or "aboveman".

Freud and Man's Soul is particularly scathing about the titles the Standard Edition has given Freud's writings. Bettelheim denies, for instance, that *The Interpretation of Dreams* is an adequate rendering of *Die Traumdeutung*, listing among his reasons that the English title fails "to summon associations to astrology" [*sic*]. But do his counter-suggestions *A Search for the Meaning of Dreams* or *An Inquiry into the Meaning of Dreams* supply these associations? The answer must surely be that they do not, and that they involve us in further loss because they remove the Biblical resonances of Freud's original: "Joseph antwortete und sprach: das ist seine Deutung" – "And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof" (Genesis 40, 18); "Aber da war keiner, der sie dem Pharao deuten konnte" – "But there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh" (Genesis 41, 8). Bettelheim is right, however, when he tells us that *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* and *Über Vergessen* . . . denote something rather less comprehensive and definitive than *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Forgetting* . . .

In his critique of the subtitle of *Towards a Psychopathology of Everyday Life* Bettelheim objects to "slips of the tongue" as a rendering of "Versprechen" – on the absurd ground that the English phrase "evokes a feeling that it was the tongue itself that was responsible for its error". He adds: "'Lapse' would have been a better choice". Would it now? "Versprechen", surely, is about speech and speech only – a "lapse" can refer to something quite different. But then: I fear that I constantly disagree with Bettelheim about the resonances of English expressions used by the translators. He protests strongly, for the length of a whole paragraph, at their temerity in using the word "anatomy" when they translated "Die Zergliederung der psychischen Persönlichkeit" as "The Anatomy of the Mental Personality". "Anatomy", he explains, is only something medical students study and has none of the meaning Freud intended here: "analysis" or "division". But does not one of the most famous of English books, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, use the word Bettelheim abjures precisely in Freud's sense? I am sure I am not alone in making this association when sending the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* where the offending term occurs.

Even when Bettelheim is right, he manages, somehow, to put himself in the wrong again. Most readers would agree, I think, that "free association" was not the happiest rendering of Freud's "Einfall" – but one can only shake one's head when Bettelheim goes on to give an example. If we ask, he tells us, "What comes to your mind in connection with that?" – the English equivalent of "Was fällt Ihnen dazu ein?" – and receive an answer which begins with the words "It occurs to me . . .", then the very wording of that answer points "to the it, from where this new and unexpected idea suddenly and often surprisingly emerges". The "it" to which Bettelheim here refers us is what used to be called the "Id". To associate this with the "it" of the impersonal construction seems to me an unworthy piece of verbal sleight-of-hand. Once we have abandoned the term "Id" and substituted "it", we shall no doubt find psychoanalytic writers playing similar games with "it's raining" or "it's getting late".

The new terminology suggested by Bettelheim will, of course, make it impossible, henceforward, to proclaim with Freud: "Where Id was, Ego shall be." But do not despair – our critic is ready with an alternative which he likes so much that he gives it to us twice over: "Where it was, there should become I." Clearly, the revisers of the Standard Edition will have to heed the difference between "being" and "becoming"; but if they follow the example Bettelheim gives them in this instance, their new version will sound suspiciously like the immortal Karl Anschauung's paper on "A. A. Milne's Honey-Balloon-Pit-Gun-Tail-Bath-Tub complex" in Frederick C. Crews's *The Pooh Perplex*.

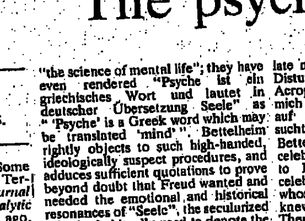
In fact, the revisers might be well advised to enlist Dr Anschauung's help in any case: for one of the tasks with which Bettelheim charges them is the explication of Freud's classical allusions, and this involves some of that literary analysis at which Dr Anschauung, has shown himself so adept. To encourage them, *Freud and Man's Soul* provides some specimens, among which an interpretation of Sophocles' Oedipus plays receives pride of place alongside Apollonius's treatment of the story of Eros and Psyche. Oedipus, it appears, disregarded the injunction "Know Thyself" when he believed he could harm the kind step-parents who brought him up; but the cruelty of his real parents was another matter. Oedipus, in other words, had an Oedipus-complex; he was "driven by unconscious pressures" when he killed Laius, Laius, in his turn, "feared that his son would replace him; initially, in the affections of his wife", . . . As for the Sphinx whose riddle Oedipus answers, Bettelheim leaves us in no doubt what *she* represents: "She is at once a symbol of the good, nurturing mother and of the bad destructive mother. She symbolizes the child's fear that, because he wishes to devour his mother so that she will be all his, never able to leave him (an idea that has its origin in the fact that the child eats off his mother, tries to swallow part of her body as he nurses), she will retaliate by devouring him". And so on, and so on, in the best Anschauung vein. It's all good old-fashioned fun, but if I were an editor of the Standard Edition and charged with its revision, I would prefer sending readers to Lemprière or the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* rather than burden the new translation with such exegeses as these.

The most influential book on Freud produced in the English-speaking world in the last ten years has undoubtedly been Frank J. Sullaway's *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*. Bettelheim does not mention Sullaway; but his title is surely a counterblast to Sullaway's, whose whole argument this new book seeks to undermine. For Sullaway psychoanalysis was a natural outgrowth of biology; Freud, in his view, synthesized and reformulated the scientific currents of the time, beginning with Darwinian biology and going on to substitute an evolutionary for a physiological model of the mind. Bettelheim will have no truck with such "scientism", which he sees as an American perversion of Freud's Viennese theories. Psychoanalysis in Bettelheim's eyes, is a humanistic discipline, a *Geisteswissenschaft* rather than a *Naturwissenschaft*. The emotional is at least as important as the intellectual in the psychoanalyst's quest for a deeper understanding of individual men and women – an understanding that will give them greater control of their life. What psychoanalysis needs is not sociobiologists and physicians but *Seelsorger*, secular pastors of the soul. Nor is its principal use that of a therapy: it uses mental illness as a metaphor, as Freud used metaphors in so many of his weightiest pronouncements. And just as Freud had constant recourse to poets, who, in his view, had long ago discovered and expressed what psychoanalysis sought to systematize, so Bettelheim goes to H.D.'s famous Socratic metaphor "the midwife of the soul" for a more adequate description of the essential Freud than "biologist of the mind".

I leave it to specialists to adjudicate between Bettelheim and H.D. on the one hand and Sullaway on the other; for my part I see some truth on both sides, and I believe that the editors of a symposium published in 1976 pinpointed accurately what Freud was trying to do when they entitled their volume: *Freud: The Fusion of Science and Humanism*. In the meantime, however, we may pay our respect to Dr Bettelheim as one of the great figures of our time; welcome his new book because it draws attention to an important problem and an urgent task; and recognize that *Freud and Man's Soul* also contains a great many questionable assertions which should not be accepted without the most rigorous scrutiny.

A selection of articles and extracts from the collected works of C. G. Jung, giving his views on the feminine and related topics (marriage, Eros, the mother, the maiden and the animal/animus concept) has recently been published under the title *Aspects of the Feminine*, translated by R. F. C. Hull (189pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £3.95 paperback. 0 7100 9522 8).

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In making this selection from five volumes of his verse, D. M. Thomas has organized his work into three separate groupings: love or erotic poems; poems drawing their inspiration from his native Cornwall; and poems with larger historical and mythological themes. These sections are genuinely distinct, and it is useful to have such a neat classification by the author himself. What may also strike the reader, however, is the persistence throughout of the impulse acknowledged in Part One. The erotic is always a shimmer on the skin of Thomas's poems. This makes them continuous with his prose fictions, and it is in any case unsurprising from a writer who has stated in an interview that the act of writing is, for him, a sexual pleasure.

What is surprising, initially, is that the first section of the book should be by far the least satisfactory. The personal erotic poems often suffer from a straining for effect, a striving to find resonant meanings in the sexual, which their frail forms can hardly bear. The villanelle, "Be great to fuck you on the dunes", with its rhyming claim that the lover's face is "a wayside stone of runes", is not wholly uncharacteristic in provoking the critical equivalent of not knowing quite where to look. The tendency to the portentous is unfortunately increased in those poems which wear all too heavily their apparatus of 1960s chic – the *I Ching*, Freudian psychiatry, Amerindian mythology. The attempt at hushed, solemn reverence, the humourless numinous and incantatory, produces too many lines like these:

Like a kachina-mask
you wear your beauty like a kachina-mask
your beauty.

These failures of personal lyric voice have presumably been recognized by Thomas himself, since the better poems in the book deflect personal emotion into imaginative reconstruction: they create narratives or fictions with their necessary empathies of characterization. The poems in the central section which re-invent some of the circumstances of Cornish history discover a dignified, measured rhetoric in which duty is done to affections and attachments from a position of half-regretful alienation. "A Cornish Graveyard at Keweenaw" evokes the lives and deaths of tin-mining emigrants to America. Its sympathetic imagining of lives widely different from his own produces a poetry of real control and tension:

Decks crammed like troopships, or
paired, two
By two, hard-rock miners driving into tale,
Ricepaper clinging to honeymoon silk.
I praise God's ship of death, restorative,
Hiding the bone, healing the lung's scar,
And imagine what Liberty has hushed their dry

Expanding stories awhile, their souls new,
Their eyes bright, moving west across the spectrum
Of hard rock, giving new land new energy.

The imagining of such "expanding stories" is the impulse behind many of the poems in the book's final section. Freud and Jung, Peter Kurten, Anastasia, Pushkin, Lorca and the poets of modern Russia are all conjured up in vignettes which suggests how they are, as Pound had it, "of present use" to Thomas. The ventriloquizing in some of these poems causes the same sorts of difficulty one encounters in some of the fiction. Thomas runs the risk of somehow appropriating the realities of other destinies, and the procedure demands great reserves of tact if it is not to seem presumptuous. When he imagines an erotic engagement with Marina Tsvetayeva, the perilous balance seems to me to collapse into something which is, at best, beside the point and at worst almost meretricious: the homage is paid with much greater sensitivity and generosity in the richer fantasizing of *The Flute Player*.

Far more successful, and very moving, is Thomas's re-creation of the anguish and guilt of the relatives of the victims in his long sequence, "Requiem for Aberfan". The dramatization of their pain reminds us that, ultimately, his celebrations of sexuality and creativity take their place in the larger context of an imagination haunted by death and by the persistence of some vague intimation of immortality, as in *The White Hotel* itself. At the end of the "Aberfan" poem, Thomas instructs Death, the "too-silencing teacher",

That children can't concentrate
On any subject, can't concentrate
Past bell and alarm, can't concentrate,
As there are doing,
For long.

The repetitions here carry the force of willed desire; their desperation is evidence of authenticity.

Thomas's related faith in the transcendence of art is unembarrassedly conveyed in the studied artifice of "Marriage of Venice to the sea: an Ascension Day", a poem which runs an elaborate descant on some lines of Gaspara Stampa's to demonstrate how "Poetry's stone"

Walks on the waters, rises, vanishes.
Even the flowing out she gathers in,
Building out of all loss a Venice, love.

It is difficult to sustain such a belief unironically in modern English poetry; and it is clear enough why Thomas needs the obliquities of artifice and literary ventriloquism. When he states a personal faith in "Poem in a Strange Language" it is as a testimony to his most inspiring Russian avatars. The indirections of such procedures here find out directions that Thomas loses in his most directly personal work:

I enter your poem, Mandelstam, yours, Anna
Akhmatova, as I enter my love –
Without understanding anything
Except its beauty and law.

And the way its cloud of small
Movements lifts lightly the fruit
Of a painful harvest and moves
With singing vowels away from death.

Pariah into preacher

Anthony Thwaite

George Barker
Anno Domini
96pp. Faber. £4.
0 571 13026 7

From *The True Confession of George Barker*, much of it composed in Barker's thirty-fifth year ("halfway to the minute through / The only life I want to know"), to the title-poem of *Anno Domini*, published in the year Barker has reached seventy, is a long span, not only in terms of time but of spiritual achievement. The self-styled 'Augustinian anarchist", adopting the stanza-form and something of the panache of Villon ("frank villainy"), in the earlier poem addressed the supposed deity with jaunty pertness:

Good God, grant that, in reviewing
My past life, I may remember
Everything I did worth doing
Seemed rather wicked in pursuing:
Grant, Good God, I shall have remitted
Those earthly pleasures beyond number
I necessarily omitted,
Exhausted by the ones committed.

Barker's favourite mask of the poet as pariah, however, was worn rather less jauntily towards the end of that poem (by which time he was forty-nine):

O master of the Thorny Ways
Hear, from the jubilant pit
The torn and tongued flesh praising it,
Hear us, as we rejoice!
So in this verb and act of praise
Of things that triumph as they die
I raise my token verse and voice
And cannot question why.

Questions why, nevertheless, seem to have occupied Barker ever since: *Villa Stellar* (1978), the book that preceded *Anno Domini*, is full of puzzled interrogatives about "things that triumph as they die", as well as questions about who did what, where and when.

And yet "Anno Domini", the thousand-odd-line poem that dominates the new book, though recognizably a Barker work (for example with its umpteenth employment of Newman's "aboriginal calumny"), does mark a new moment in the canon of Barker's theology. "The poet reflects on the eternal verities with the chastened wisdom that is the privilege of age", comments the blurb. That is one way of putting it: I prefer to see it as Barker's final adoption of the mask of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes in place of Villon the pariah. It is a quietly ironical Preacher:

at a time of bankers
to exercise a little charity:
at a time of soldiers
to cultivate small gardens;
at a time of categorical imperatives
to grow moderately civilized;
at a time of politicians
to trust only to children and demigods.

The whole poem is an invocation to a God who bears many names – "Lord of the raddled and the penurious", Magister, Moses, "director", even "MFH" (enjoined to "release the hounds of Here and Hereafter"). This God is a mystery. He allows, or seems to allow, both commonplace horrors ("the run-over child") and spectacular ones (Hiroshima). At the same time, it is acknowledged – though the mystery is still there – that much seems purposeful:

But can I confide to you, mediator,
the fear I fear I fear
faced with the sleight of hand you perform
upon the ascending spheres and even
upon every day and the common place?
As when rain chooses to fall upon
fields that need it, or the insane sun
declines the whim to fry us like onions
or as the star-fished sea
keeps to its beds and basins on the classroom globe.
These things can be seen, I know,
as subject to simple laws. And these are the mysteries
I find myself facing with a kind of tremble.

For, as I see it, these natural laws
comprise the only evidence I can perceive
of a superior purpose working up through all things.

This seems a different creature from the "Augustinian anarchist", the sopegrace scapegoat, the apocalyptic Manichaean who wrote his coruscating hymns to damnation right through from *Calamiterror* (1937) to *The True Confession*. It would be fatuous to say that Barker has mellowed; but he seems to have come to terms with "vanity and vexation of spirit", in a way that still lets him exercise his always considerable eloquent skills.

As can be seen from the quotations, "Anno Domini" is written in a kind of measure which is Hebraic in its rhetorical balancing acts, with perhaps a hint from the Anglo-Saxon in its strongly marked caesuras. In a recent issue of *PN Review* (largely given over to celebration of his seventieth birthday), Barker in an interview says that he composed the poem on to a tape-recorder, not knowing until he heard it back how it should be transcribed. Whatever the method of composition, the poem as it comes off the page is a beautifully controlled piece of work, allowing all Barker's habitual garrulities, jokes, puns, proper-name sonorities, coat-trailing dictums, cheeky hyperboles and exaggerated locutions to be accommodated into its movement forward. It will stand, along with *The True Confession*, as one of the major poems of a poet who once wrote: "To preserve and to enlarge the rejoicing categories of created things is the duty of the poet."

The two poems which make up the rest of the book show Barker in characteristic rather than new form. "Elegy" is a stately, rather Yeatsian monody ("And Randall Swingler, that most honest man") on dead friends, most of whom he has commemorated before: Minton, Colquhoun, MacBryde, Dylan Thomas, Brian Higgins, David Archer, Eliot, MacNeice, Thomas Blackburn. "The Ship of Fools" is a typically Barkerian roisterous sardonic ballad:

O long and late we boozed and ate
and rogered at the game,
and if we had known what we know now
it would have been the same.

"Elegy" and "The Ship of Fools" simply confirm things that have been said about Barker, good and bad, for the past forty-five or so years. "Anno Domini" makes one think again.

Three Ways of Pinking Ivory

'By this I am telling it should be
Duty elephant. Jungle wallahs daub
The young tusks unless it comes to pass
Into the jungle in case it is stolen.
All the daubs become deep stains, isn't it!
Magenta, pink, this one very pink dream.
Yes, sir, yes sir, anything sir likes sir.'

'All you need is a bowl of rose water.
Dip in your ivory, dunk it there
For two three days. Prepare another bowl
If you are insisting on a darker hue,
Like this little one is Sarasvati.
You prefer this ivory, white as bone?
Yes sir, yes sir, anything sir likes sir.'

'Acquire it. And wait. You can do nothing
To hurry it any more than you can
Hurry time, or arrest it. This bracelet
Is a bit old, at least ten years. It has
Life of its own, no, and as you yellow
With years, it will yellow also, or pink.
Yes sir, yes sir, anything sir likes sir.'

Kevin Crossley-Holland

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LEWIS FOREMAN

Bax: A composer and his times
491pp. Scolar. £27.50.
0 85967 643 9

Lewis Foreman's *Bax: A composer and his times* is a fascinating book, which should be read by anyone interested in English music. It is full of information, not only about Bax but about the whole period in which he worked, with illuminating sidelights on Elgar, Delius, Vaughan Williams and many others. It is far more detailed than any previous study of the composer. Much of this detail takes the form of hitherto unpublished letters, some of them highly revealing, or other documents, such as BBC memorandа. It is also well written, no small virtue in a work of such length. Finally, though written with obvious affection, it takes an admirably objective view of its subject. It deserves a place alongside Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Elgar* and John Bird's life of Percy Grainger as a classic of English musical biography.

The external aspects of Bax's life are well known. The wealthy family, the private education, the period at the Royal Academy of Music, the visits to Ireland and Scotland, the phenomenal output of symphonies, tone poems and chamber music (not to mention a host of other works, listed in Foreman's exhaustive catalogue), the final years as Master of the King's Musick – all this is familiar from previous books, though every one of these areas is here illuminated by new detail. Bax's personality, however, has always been something of a mystery, not only because he was a complex man, who liked to keep his friends in separate compartments (to the extent that AE, who knew him only as a fellow poet, was amazed to hear him talking about music), but because his "Celtic" interests have tended to encourage a vague and flowery style from his biographers. Less twilight and more daylight was needed here. Without psychologizing about his subject, but simply by presenting him in fuller detail, Foreman establishes a much more credible figure; not necessarily a more likeable one, but one with whom it is easier to sympathize precisely because of his contradictoriness. Foreman does not try to whitewash Bax's less attractive characteristics; he just gives the facts and lets them speak for themselves. Bax's lack of interest in the First World War (Foreman describes his attitude as "disinterested" but that is the wrong word) may be easier to understand now than it was at the time, though it still seems odd. Indifference is, after all, a form of self-protection. On the other hand, Bax's description of the bombing of London as "totally without charm", even if intended as ironic, sounds callous. In 1920, when his national reputation was more or less secure, he wrote to *The Sunday Times* proposing that all German music should be banned from British concert programmes and that only English and American works should be played. He was surprised at how badly this proposal was received.

In his personal dealings Bax was warm and generous: there is a letter of 1919 in which he consoles a friend most tenderly over the break-up of her marriage (Bax had separated from his wife the previous year). He was also prone to self-dramatization: in a letter of 1917 he writes of the "lovely and sometimes rather tragic adventures in which Tania and I are wandering". "Tania" was the pianist Harriet Cohen, whose relationship with Bax forms one of the principal themes of the book. Their picture appears on the front cover, Tania looking sullen, self-absorbed, a little too conscious of her own beauty, while Bax wears a mournful, long-suffering expression. They met in 1913. Previous books on Bax have mentioned Harriet only fleetingly, if at all, and then only in terms which would have been approved by the lady herself. (A book on Bax which was planned in the late 1940s had to be abandoned because of her constant interference.) Foreman shows that her influence on Bax was almost wholly destructive, not least because she insisted on having exclusive performance rights over music she could barely play.

But Bax brought a lot of it on himself. In the same letter of 1917 he writes that "the whole of life has been altered by this wonderful stray creature from the faery hills". He always thought of his women in such terms. In 1926 he met Mary Gleaves, a much younger woman than Harriet; he loved her for the rest of his life, not telling Harriet about her until 1948 (when predictable tantrums ensued – Foreman recounts this sort of thing with remarkable coolness). In 1931 Bax wrote to Mary: "I know I often ask you if you mind being treated as something between a faery and a child, and maybe you wish I would sometimes speak of ordinary life and all the grimness which most of my music deals with. But I can't yet, my little love, I am so impossibly happy in the faeryland where I first found you." We are not told how Mary reacted to this. Then in 1937, when he was in his fifties, he fell in love with yet another woman, whom he described as a "faery princess". This hopeless idealizing of one woman after another, always in the language of the 1890s (his first important literary experience was his encounter with the poetry of Yeats), represents a kind of refusal to grow up. In the 1930s he always went home to his mother for Christmas.

It is tempting to link all this – though Foreman has the good taste not to do so – with the impractical side of Bax's nature, and in particular with his failure to promote his works once they were finished, a failure which contrasts alarmingly with the phenomenal energy he devoted to producing them in the first place. (Many of them have still not been performed.) Foreman puts some of Bax's failures down to "sheer bad luck", and it is true that there are examples of this, as when a fire destroyed his publisher's offices, putting most of his works out of print at one blow. But one cannot help feeling that Bax himself was the cause of most of his "bad luck", losing interest in his works as soon as they were completed. "Bad luck" in this context usually means poor promotion.

As for the music, Foreman makes it clear that he is not primarily concerned with analysis. His descriptions of the music are simple but perfectly adequate for a book of this kind; he is particularly good at teasing out programmatic implications, as in his section on the Fourth Symphony. One could perhaps wish for just a little more on structure: the programmatic implications have a decided influence on the form, making it seem episodic and (unusually for the period) shifting the emphasis from development to statement. Bax's astonishing ear for orchestral texture serves to emphasize this. The opening of his Third Symphony, for example, is unlike anything else in music, presenting a type of atonal harmony which is so strongly characterized, and so closely bound up with its orchestration, that it makes the rest of the movement seem like an anti-climax. These matters are important because they affect critical judgments. Once or twice in the book the judgments sit rather uneasily with the musical description (as in the section on *In the Faery Hills*); perhaps analysis might have made one or the other more convincing. But most of the judgments seem fair. For Foreman, Bax reaches "the peak" with *Winter Legends* and the Sixth Symphony, and I would not wish to dissent from that view.

One other area where we could have benefited from more detail is Bax's relation to other artists, notably Yeats. In view of the extravagant praise he piled on Yeats's poetry (saying, for example, that it meant more to him than "all the music of the centuries"), it would have been interesting to know when they met, what their precise relationship was and how it was expressed. Bax wrote many poems in a vaguely Yeatsian style; but even a work like *The Garden of Fand* (1913) is, in its way, a homage to Yeats, and echoes from it are still sounding through Bax's music as late as the Sixth Symphony. When Yeats died, Bax wrote to his brother, "I feel a most poignant loss in that the greatest of us all is no more." These feelings are hard to understand since Yeats is so little mentioned in the preceding pages. But there could also have been more on Bax's relation to Strauss, Stravinsky, Sibelius, Delius, even Grainger. We are told that Bax once played through an arrangement of Grainger's *The Warriors* for two pianos, six hands, but not what he thought of it. He also played through the piano-duet version of *The Rite of Spring*, soon after its publication in 1913. Again one wants to know his reaction: Bax must have been the only English composer responding to Stravinsky at that date (this was nearly ten years before *Façade*). He also responded, forty years before anyone else, to Debussy's *Jeux*. Connections of this sort, if they are to mean anything, must be supported by documentary evidence, records of meetings, dates and places. One cannot expect to find all this in a biography, but if it is not in a biography, where is one to find it? Foreman's book goes a long way in telling us all we need to know about Bax. I just wish it had gone a little further.

Orchestrated oppositions

Lionel Pike

CHRISTOPHER BALLANTINE

Twentieth Century Symphony
223pp. Durham: Dennis Dobson.
£12.95.
0 234 72042 5

This book is the first attempt at a survey of the twentieth-century symphony: the author establishes patterns and discovers matters of common concern to composers. Couched in straightforward language, the book is aimed at the general reader and the composers discussed represent a sensible geographical spread.

Christopher Ballantine provides a thorough background to his discussion in a section entitled "The symphony before Mahler: a brief retrospect", which in fact takes up a third of the book. Ironically, this is the best part, for it contains detailed observations and valuable insights. Naturally, one might disagree with the author over points of interpretation. Perhaps one misses most a discussion of the tensions endemic to symphonic form: the dramatic moment of recapitulation, for example, is an obvious feature that could have been explored with advantage. Professor Ballantine illustrates the way in which Beethoven overawed later composers, though he might have made more of the trouble that so many had with their finales. The idea that symphonic form is an expression of its material is illustrated by several quotations, though not by real analysis.

The remainder of the book suffers in several ways: first, as the author admits, there is no attempt to be comprehensive. Ballantine cannot therefore be blamed for choosing a large number of works and dealing with isolated movements from them as if they were detachable; but this approach has evident drawbacks if a work is to be considered as a logical whole. Second, some of the misapprehensions might have been avoided if the author had had a greater command of recent writing in this field. Again, he is scarcely to blame, for present-day publishing takes an unconscionable time; but the last date in the bibliography is 1976, and the intervening seven years have seen the publication of various works that might have led the Ballantine to re-evaluate his ideas. In particular, Robert Layton's translation of Tawastsjerna's *Sibelius* (Volume 1, 1976), Charles Rosen's seminal study *Sonata Forms* (1980) and various recent detailed analyses of the symphonic idea (Beethoven, Bruckner, Sibelius) are not taken into account. Third, many printing errors (and some repetitions) should have been eradicated.

Ballantine insists on "dualism" as a *sine qua non* of the true symphony: by this he understands the opposition of themes or tonalities (emphasis on the latter, as he says, has changed considerably during this century). Works not exhibiting such dualism are therefore not considered. Although Ballantine states that the inclusion or rejection of a work should not be taken as a value judgment, one cannot help but wonder whether other types of symphony ought to have been considered. He declines, for instance, to discuss Rubbra's Fifth Symphony because "it is a work of pure contrapuntal monism" and therefore does not come into his selected field of study; yet the remarks he makes about Roy Harris could apply equally well to Rubbra. His view is that, though contrapuntal forms might constitute part of a symphony, a completely polyphonic work is necessarily monistic. Such a view seems inadequate on two counts: First, counterpoint is not invariably monistic, and there is no reason why symphonic composers who happen to think contrapuntally should not build dualism into their music. Indeed, Ballantine seems at times to suggest this, especially when he seeks to answer his own question, "What if a counterpoint should so far protest its individuality that it comes into *conflict* with its context?" It would seem a difficult task to find a twentieth-century symphony where all the contrapuntal lines are similar throughout.

Second, Ballantine's view of dualism is too restricted: and rhythm is a vital area – in, for example, Sibelius's Fifth Symphony and Robert Simpson's First – that is virtually ignored. (One might say the same about texture, which is not given any detailed treatment.) Passacaglia and ostinato, we are told, are monistic: yet dualistic tensions can surely exist between the treadmill effect of a recurrent figure and the ongoing nature of variations worked against it. Such dualism is surely no less audible than the balances and imbalances discovered by the author in his close and fascinating analysis of Webern's Opus 21.

What, then, we may ask, *is* a symphony? It is well known that two of the greatest symphonists of this century disagreed about this: yet it is astonishing that neither Sibelius's nor Mahler's view is quoted in this book. "The large-scale integration of contrasts" does that logical growth of ideas, with exploration of a problem in terms as complete as possible, must also be taken into account. It is hard to see how this can be done while treating detached movements, as Ballantine so often does. Moreover, his comment that "Borodin's First Symphony has a first movement that begins by looking like sonata form but ends by destroying the illusion of duality as subjects are shown really to be one and the same" implies that thematic derivations and organic growth preclude dualism. Beethoven's Fourth Symphony demonstrates the fallacy of this view. Ballantine is nearer to the truth when he states, "Each harmonic step forward brings with it a crucial imbalance so that it stands in need of reintegration." Here we are close to the heart of the matter.

Findings by Leonard Bernstein (376pp. Macdonald. £12.95. 0 356 05992 8) is a profusely illustrated compilation of Bernstein's writings, ranging through his juvenilia (class compositions, concert reviews, a sonnet "On Acquiring Knowledge" and his Harvard Bachelor's Thesis on "The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music"), "Postwar Meditations", his years with the New York Philharmonic, and the subsequent decade, 1969 to 1980. To this heterogeneous self-portrait is added a classified list of his musical compositions after the 1914–18 war and their careers were ended by the fall of Singapore.

It was a more free and easy world than that inhabited by their counterparts in India and one more or less immune from politics. As Allen accurately phrases it,

> the central theme is no longer that of one supremely successful (in colonial terms) racial minority imposing itself upon a rather unsuccessful (again, speaking in colonial terms) majority – as in Africa and India – but of several races drawn to the same watery crossroads principally by the lure of trade; competing as rivals but co-existing more or less as equals. The central image is now a shifting one: of sea panoramas and archipelagoes and casuarina-fringed sands backed by impenetrable rain forest.

It seems in general to have been a fairly happy and rewarding time for most of the planters and civil servants who spent their lives on the shores of the South China Sea. By the time the contributors to this book departed from the scene warring medieval states had been transformed into peaceful democracies and, as Sjovald Cunningham-Brown remarks in his introduction, "such things cannot be achieved by domination, but only by the closest and most friendly of working relationships".

Perhaps the most striking difference between India and South-East Asia was that "whereas in India the *box-wallahs* took second place to the Indian Civil Service, in Malaya the heads of commerce were really the heads of the community".

In many respects, allowing for the differences in landscape and climate, life up-country in Malaya nevertheless proceeded in much the same fashion as it did up-country in India. Riding, tennis, bridge, shooting, swimming, excursions into the jungle, but mostly hard work, and at the end of the day, drinking. As Henri Fauconnier wrote in his *The Soul of Malaya*: "The Bar never stopped pouring out whisky: bottles of soda-water opened with a rhythmic hiss like ripples in the sand. The talk was, of course, of rubber." John Baxter, a planter in the North Borneo jungle, observes, "without drink it would have been difficult to carry on. I don't think that I could have stuck life without it."

These images of tropical life suggest a society as much suited to loners, eccentrics and autocrats, as to those who played games fitted in, and generally made the right social noises. Such a figure as Captain Berkeley, the "uncrowned King of Upper Perak", unusual though he was, occasions no great surprise. It was Berkeley who said to his successor, "Here we dispense justice not law." Once, just about to embark on an elephant-ride, Berkeley was chased after by his clerk with the news that he had twenty-five cases in court. On being assured that the offences were minor and that all pleaded guilty, Berkeley authorized that odd numbers should be discharged and even numbers fined five dollars. On another occasion, when there was a dispute over a boundary, Berkeley formed the two sides into teams, held a tug-of-war contest with rotan creepers, and awarded the land to the winning team. He also built himself a double-barrelled lavatory, so that he could join his generally reluctant guests after breakfast.

These stories have a sad ending, up to a point; but though war killed off many, some who survived went back. Like, for example, Cunningham-Brown, now back in Penang and in the spice business:

> It is one of those old perfumed trades where one has to have a bath to get the smell of cloves off one in the evening. And it often makes me laugh when I'm doing this job to think that this is where we came in, that this is exactly the way they were doing their job in 1686 on the territory of Ben Coolen in Sumatra, which was our very first possession in South-East Asia – young men in the East India Company collecting the cloves as I am . . . that is an additional enchantment to a life that I find perfectly satisfying.

Robert Nicholl, working now for the Sultan of Brunei, makes makes much the same point: "It's surprising how gratifying it is to come across boys whom one first saw as urchins puffing hard at their cheroots and knocking back glasses of *borak*, and then taught in one's sixth form. Now they are very important people either in government or in commerce and so one feels that all those years in Sarawak were not only happy but fruitful. They were not wasted years."

To have spent thirty years, in such fabulous country, returning in the tropical dusk to *phits*, *stengahs* and ginslings, and to end up with a sense of accomplishment, seems certainly to have been a life worth living.

Whimsically busy

Christopher Reid

MICHAEL ONDAATJE

Running in the Family
207pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
0 575 03289 8

"What began it all was the bright bone of a dream I could hardly hold on to." Michael Ondaatje is a poet with a high reputation in Canada, where he now lives, but he does himself a disservice by opening the first chapter of his book of memoirs with a sentence as droppable as the one quoted here. For all its occasional portentousness, however ("*Asta*. The name was a gasp from a dying mouth"); *Running in the Family* turns out to be an intelligent and responsible piece of work, full of good stories and colourful evocations of a world that will be foreign to most of its readers.

The book conflates descriptions of two separate visits to Sri Lanka, where Ondaatje was born and lived for the early part of his childhood. Significantly, the country is always referred to as "Ceylon" in his text, for this is very much an exploration of times past, a way of life that has all but irrevocably vanished. The Ondaatjes, and the other wealthy families to whom they were connected by marriage, were of an agreeable racial mixture: "Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations." They formed a social group quite distinct from that of the European and English colonists, who were regarded as "transients, snobs and racists".

By quizzing surviving relatives and friends, Ondaatje has created a picture of the life and times of his parents' and grandparents' generations that is necessarily impressionistic, but nonetheless telling. He is particularly good on the 1920s, the decade summed up by his maternal grandmother, Lalla, as "so whimsical, so busy – that we were always tired". The hectic party-going, drinking, gambling and adulterizing described here might have been characteristic of a fast set in any part of the world, but detailed annotations of the people involved and of their exotic setting give Ondaatje's account a special poignancy.

Visiting the club at Nuwara Eliya "in buggies pulled by bulls", gate-crashing ships in harbour in order to get at the duty-free booze, learning to tango on the rubber estate at Gasanawa, they lived at a self-destructive pace and achieved little of consequence, but one is glad to have their exploits recorded. Francis de Saram, who would put his teeth in his back pocket before fighting, the aunt who invented "betting on which crow would leave a wall first" pastime so popular that the government considered putting a bounty on crows") and Sammy Diaz Bandaransike, who waged war on the author's father through the pages of rest-house visitors' books, are memorably recalled.

All this, however, is simply to set the scene for the book's two major portraits, those of Lalla and of Mervyn Ondaatje, the author's father. The former was a kindly and impulsive woman, as "whimsical" as the decade she so aptly described. Anecdotes about her are plentiful. She was the first woman in Ceylon to have a breast removed surgically and the rubber article that replaced it was a constant bother to her and an embarrassment to others. She exercised a considerable fascination on children, but her generosity, here as elsewhere, was tempered by a "noli me tangere" aloofness. She drank heavily and died by drowning.

Drink figures, too, as the motif of Mervyn Ondaatje's life. He was a spectacular scapegrace, who, given money by his parents to pay for an English education, spent two and a half years living as a civilian in Cambridge, enjoying himself lavishly in the company of students, until he was eventually found out and obliged to return home. Bouts of drinking at regular intervals helped to ruin his first marriage and destroy his prosperity, making him a danger to his children when driving and a menace to the entire railway system of Ceylon, to which he was mysteriously attracted during alcoholic episodes. The record is presented factually and we are left to make what we can of this man, who inspired both terror and fondness.

It is only when the author's "poetic" impulses begin to assert themselves that the reader is liable to quibble. Those fictionalized passages that are meant to convey Lalla's drowning and Mervyn's moods of introspectiveness do not succeed. There is, however, much that is uniquely enjoyable and moving in this book and when Ondaatje allows events to speak for themselves he achieves true eloquence.

Swimming

As much as singing swimming
is essentially beyond
me. My torso doesn't turn
sideways in sync with my breath.
My vestigial legs in tow,
I paddle forward, slow

as a disabled steamboat, slow
as the clock on the swimming
pool wall. A will tow-
ing a whale. Ten laps and I'm beyond
caring what my laboring breath
sounds like. I take my turn

within the turn-
ing wheel of swimmers slow
as myself. I hoard a breath,
submerge, and splash my arms, swimming
towards that fabled flash beyond
conscious grasp, tow-

ards an order as tow-
eringly integral as Turn-
er's seas as they roll beyond
their blue horizons, slow
mastadons of colour swimming
in their own deep breath.

The measured burning of the breath
as it fights the flesh's undertow,
the meshing of motions till swimming
becomes a single, smooth turn-
table revolving the vertebrae in slow
motion micro-ballets. Is that beyond

what I dare hope? And beyond
that, is there a higher order, a breath
so light, a light so slow
to dawn, a gift so reluctant to bestow
itself, I can't imagine it – and so return
to my original idea of swimming?

Swimming as hope, as a path beyond
past incapacities, as turn-on. Each breath
a lurch towards that goal. But oh how slow.

Tom Disch

Servants of empire

Alan Ross

CHARLES ALLEN (Editor)

Tales from the South China Seas: Images of the British in South-East Asia in the Twentieth Century
240pp. André Deutsch/BBC. £10.95.
0 233 97504 7 (André Deutsch)
0 563 20032 4 (BBC)

Tales from the South China Seas completes the "imperial" trilogy which began with *Plain Tales from the Raj* and continued with *Tales from the Dark Continent*. Broadcast on BBC 4 as "oral history documentaries", the formula in each case remains the same. Under Charles Allen's patient and gentle guidance a number of former servants of empire and their "mems" offer glimpses of a more innocent and quieter past; in the process of this a colonial mosaic is achieved that sets the popular and fictional image of life "out East" or in the bush in a more austere context.

Allen is the most sympathetic and discreet of editors, unobtrusively making an informative collage out of what could have been simply cocktail-party reminiscences or disjointed shop talk. As it is, neither gets out of hand. The disadvantages of this method when transferred from radio to print, the absence of identifiable voices, are obvious enough. In addition, the multiple form of narration leads to a constant switching of interest and to fragmentation. The background fills up nicely with detail but there is no foreground. The result is the equivalent of a film dealing entirely in crowd scenes, the epic novel without a hero.

They are, however, crowd scenes admirably managed. Kipling and Edgar Wallace have been exchanged in this final volume for Conrad, Maugham and Fauconnier. Indian Civil Servants, soldiers, and District Officers in Africa are replaced by rubber-planters, tin-miners, steamer-captains and police officers. The landscape is altogether lusher and more tropical. Instead of the élitist society, the plains and large cities of British India, there are isolated bungalows in lonely plantations, small sea-ports and romantic islands. Allen's characters lived out their lives in such places as the Malay States, the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Borneo and Sarawak. They went out, for the most part, shortly

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Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

What Philip Larkin rightly calls "one of the occasional pure flowerings of imagination for which the English are so seldom given credit" has suffered transplantation once again. The Arts Council Poetry Library has, along with the rest of the Literature Department, returned from its opulent orange surroundings in Covent Garden to the gloomy marble halls of the Arts Council's headquarters at 105 Piccadilly.

The Poetry Library was started in 1953, even before the Literature Department existed. Until 1969 it was housed by the National Book League in Albemarle Street (the NBL has also removed); then it was given what was virtually a cupboard office at 105 Piccadilly. It was there that I first encountered the collection and its enthusiastic librarian of the past ten years, Jonathan Barker. The cramped conditions meant that one literally rubbed shoulders with half the practising poets in London.

Thanks to Jonathan Barker's passion for expanding both the collection and the number of people who use it, the Library had to be given proper space when the Literature Department moved in 1978 to offices above the Arts Council Bookshop in Long Acre. In the past ten years the number of volumes has increased from 6,000 to 22,000, and the Library receives some 6,000 visits a year. The need for economy has driven the Arts Council's literary activities back to 105 Piccadilly, and the Library is now in a former conference room on the ground floor. It has just as many shelves, but they are rather closer together.

The Poetry Library is certainly the best collection of twentieth-century poetry in the English language generally accessible to the public anywhere. There are two copies of everything, one for loan and one for reference, and the shelves bear witness to the ubiquity of the English language: the poets are not simply North American and British, but African, Caribbean and Australasian. The most refreshing aspect of the place, however, is that beyond reference works, the library does not contain a single word of criticism. The texts reign supreme.

Jonathan Barker does not think the removal to 105 Piccadilly will hurt the Library's progress. The hours have necessarily changed, but the Arts Council welcomes the idea of researchers, poets and readers scurrying in and out. I hope that Philip Larkin's comment on the Long Acre library will remain true of it in its new premises: "The idea of poetry, vague enough outside, is here immediate and busy, like a political campaign."

• • •

The news that the Arts Council has been told to cut its spending in the current year by £1.8 million as part of the government's not-candle-end-savings casts a long shadow over the prospects for next year's Arts Council budgets.

This is the time of year when the respective departments submit their estimated needs for consideration by the Council, and I am glad to report that the Literature Panel has submitted schemes which would, if accepted, call for a considerable increase in the Literature Department's budget. (The figure could be almost as much as the £1.8 million the Arts Minister is trying to claw back.) The Literature Director Charles Osborne confirms that the Department's shopping list includes two new schemes, one in the field of "literary" publishing, the other to encourage fresh initiatives in the Regional Arts Associations, both of which call for new money. I also understand that there may be an expansion in the field of Writer's Fellowships, though the working party unanimously called for at the Arts Council's own conference will not be set up.

• • •

For the last couple of years a faint drumming in the ears of the book-buying public has been getting louder and louder: "The Best of British Authors", "The Best of Young British Novelists", "Bookshow", "Post-A Book", "Health and Fitness Booktime". This cheerful – and sometimes irritating – sound has been coming from the four-year-old Book Marketing Council, which this month burst out at full volume to beat the drum for its first ever annual general meeting.

The Book Marketing Council was set up as a division of the Publishers' Association in 1979. Publishers, after all, have a vested interest in selling more books. But they are only part of the operation, the other half (once the poor people who actually write the stuff) are the booksellers. The two sides do not always see eye to eye on the allocation of profits and responsibilities, and the dynamics of institutions being what they are, the Booksellers' Association and the Publishers' Association are wary of each other.

The Book Marketing Council is making a valiant effort to bridge the gap, in the greater interest of maintaining the competitiveness of books and reading with other forms of leisure. The BMC remains a division of the PA, but it raises its income from publishers by a direct subscription. At the same time associate membership has opened the way for printers, book clubs, and most important, booksellers, to have a say in its affairs. The BMC has an income of about £125,000, and since it has no overheads, these being paid by the PA, it is as rich as, if not richer than, the National Book League (also represented on the BMC), which was politely described as a "non-commercial encourager of reading".

The BMC's genial director, Desmond Clarke, divides its work between research and public relations. The promotional side attracts most interest, as it should. (There are five campaigns coming next year, beginning with "The Best Novels of Our Time", a scheme of such grandeur as to be close to folly.) But from the point of view of getting more books into more shopping bags, the BMC's studies of why and how books are bought – more significantly, why they are *not* bought – may prove to have more lasting effect. Campaigns which concentrate interest on specific genres may only be shifting the amount of money spent on books from one shelf to another. Nor can the BMC rely for ever on the free publicity given to such events as the Young British Novelists. Clarke claims some success in persuading the BBC to mount a new monthly programme, "Bookmark", this Autumn. A presenter has not been announced yet, though the name of Jeffrey Archer has been mentioned, a hint at the pitch the programme will make.

There is no doubt that if the Book Marketing Council did not exist it would have to be invented, but in spite of its recent structural changes it will need more independence, in terms of both finance and organization, if it is to establish itself as a voice for all, rather than some, sectional interests. It was emblematic that while the chief executive of the PA, Clive Bradley, spoke from the rostrum, the President of the Booksellers' Association, Jo Elsley, spoke from the floor. He gave enthusiastic support to the BMC, and was flattered to be invited to its meeting, but he pointed out that booksellers could only sell more books if they were able to make more profits.

• • •

In contrast to the air-conditioned affluence of the Portman Square Hotel, where the BMC met, there was a beleaguered air about this year's "Sociology of Literature" conference at Essex University. This may have been something to do with its having to share the littered campus with 4000 Italian schoolchildren, a European Frisbee championship and – most sinister of all – a course for dog handlers, but it was also to do with the state of the conference itself.

The theme was "Confronting the Crisis, 1968–1983", and the crisis proved to be internal as well as external. For several years the Sociology of Literature conferences have been a haven for academic Marxists and structuralists, where they have been able to talk to each other in their own impenetrable language. Last year's conference was devoted to assessing the theoretical work done over the past dozen years in the overlapping disciplines of literary criticism, semiology, sociology and cultural history. (Last year's conference papers, *The Politics of Theory*, edited by Francis Barker, are published by the University of Essex Press, price £7.00.)

This year the organizers decided to turn from theory to praxis, in an attempt "to elaborate the contemporary possibilities for political struggle in the cultural field". Unfortunately, a sizeable section of the conference's constituency did not follow this lead. Instead, they chose to attend a conference at Southampton University the weekend before, on the subject of "Theory and Text". It seems that revolutionary critical thoughts are more popular than revolutionary critical deeds. Attendance at Essex was the smallest ever, with fewer than half last year's 150 turning up.

The practical centre of "Confronting the Crisis" was a discussion of the Falklands War, though the sub-text, one might say, was Mrs Thatcher's subsequent victory at the polls rather than her victory in the South Atlantic. There were papers from writer and poet Christopher Hampton (not to be confused with the playwright of the same name), John Arden (who *is* the playwright of the same name), and media-analyst Anthony Barnett. Hampton's was a straight political condemnation of Thatcherism, Arden's was a witty and vigorous discussion of the Irish perspective on the Falklands war, and Barnett's a critique of the newspaper handling of the campaign.

In spite of the presence of a poet and a playwright, there was almost no consideration of the cultural, as opposed to political aspects of the Falklands. There was no discussion of the plays and films that have already begun to emerge as reflections on the event. Extraordinarily, there was no public mention of the decision of the Plymouth Theatre Royal not to allow the Royal Court to mount its production of *Falklands Voices* in Plymouth as part of a regional tour. Having abandoned the cultural field, speakers at the conference did not come up with any political answers either.

The extent to which the crisis was internal was confirmed by a "workshop" discussion conducted by Jenny Taylor of Leeds University on the "Origins of the Crisis in radical intellectuals". A better title would have been "Thoughts on the present discontents" for a historical perspective (that is, going back as far as the 1930s) was quickly abandoned in favour of a discussion of the isolation of the radical intellectuals in the room. They feel isolated within their institutions, and retreat into research, unable to mount any defence against the pressure of economic cuts and ideological change; they feel isolated from succeeding generations, who are bitterly observed that the average age of those present was just below forty: the generation of 1968 confronted by the crisis of 1983. The most positive response came from a Cambridge graduate, Boyd Tonkin, whose paper "Sources of the New Conservatism" scrutinized the writings of the Scruton school with a view to challenging the intellectual claims of the new right by recognizing that such claims exist.

• • •

One of the intellectual resources of the New Conservatism is the Centre for Policy Studies, founded by Mrs Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph. The centre's chairman, Hugh Thomas (Lord Thomas of Swynnerton) has written a pamphlet for the centre which is critical of official policy, and advocates an act of conservation that would show the government to be 'conservative' in the most creative sense of the word".

The Case for the Round Reading Room (£3. 0 905880 48 X) argues that present plans to erect a "bibliopolis" on the Euston Road site next to St Pancras Station should be modified. At present an entirely new library complex, including storage, reading rooms, exhibition and other ancillary facilities is being planned at a projected cost of £300 million, with a view to completion in the 1990s. The first stage, a large hole in the ground that will store books on four floors, is already under way. Lord Thomas concedes the need for more storage space, but he argues that all that need be done is to connect the Euston Road store with the present reading room by a tunnel.

At the heart of Lord Thomas's case (as it is indeed at the heart of the British Museum building) is the need to preserve Sir Anthony Panizzi's magnificent round reading room, which was formally opened in 1857. Besides rehearsing the case for conserving the room itself (which will otherwise be taken over for display purposes), Lord Thomas claims that it is still entirely suitable for its purpose as a research resource. He contrasts it very favourably with the split-level design proposed for Euston Road. His main point against the new design is that the argument that the round room is overwhelmed by visitors is no longer valid: stricter controls on the issue of tickets, and a decline in the summer intercontinental traffic of scholars means that the place is no longer overcrowded, and the service is now efficient.

With perception sharpened by a weekend at Essex, it is not difficult to detect certain ideological principles that underpin Lord Thomas's argument. He comments that the new building will be "less a library than a community centre", and he makes a spirited defence of the reading room as a service to "an elite of scholars". In passing, he shows chauvinistic animosity to "well-endowed students from abroad" who used to clog the apparatus in high summer. His greatest objection appears to be that the new building will increase employment, for librarians. On the other hand, the modifications he proposes would keep in work a lovely building, and save at least £200 million. You could run the Arts Council's Literature Department quite adequately on that.

The Arts Council Poetry Library, 105 Piccadilly, is open on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 11 am to 5 pm; with a later opening on Wednesday and Friday from 11 am to 7 pm.

Fifty years on: Peter Fleming's 'Brazilian Adventure'

The TLS of July 27, 1933, carried the following review by E. Mavrogordato of Brazilian Adventure *by Peter Fleming:*

This is the story of a great adventure written by a gifted writer who knows it was a great adventure. So far, so good; but that is not all; our gifted writer knows that great adventures are not done—not by Old Etonians: so what we get from him is a composite story made up of adventure and apology for adventure. It is clear from the narrative that more than once the narrator and his co-adventurers would have come to Last Gasps and to Droppings in Tracks in the interior of Brazil but for aesthetic revulsion at dying the death of a Best Seller. They were saved by "a sense of parody" which reduced every Sealing of Doom to its lowest terms. This sense of parody dictates the book: –

> It had been alive from the first. The whole technique of exploring is overlaid with conventions so unmistakable and so often mocked – has a jargon so flashily impressive and easily guyed that the man who at his first essay adopts the conventions and employs the jargon must lack both shame and humour. Even in London we had found it impossible to talk of our plans without apologetically draping the pretensions of such words as Standing Camp in inverted commas. We had been careful to refer to the rains as beginning, not as breaking. We spoke always of going, rather than of striking, up a river.

In order not to embarrass Mr. Fleming by using words not in good taste, let us say that he and one or two friends "went" from Rio de Janeiro to Pará by what, according to the map, may well have been the shortest line. For much of the journey they went down the Araguaya, a tributary of the Amazon, and in the course of it, for a purpose of their own, they went up a tributary of that tributary – the Tapirapé; in fact, they went by water. Those vulgar enough to think that the Tapirapé is in the Back of Beyond will please understand that it is in Matto Grosso. As the name implies, the vegetation is thick. But if you have occasion to hack your way – that is, proceed – through it you will come to some watercourse before you die of thirst, unless it bends away from the line of your compass course. But "the alligators, the snakes, the man-eating fish, the lurking savages, those dreadful insects" – these are dismissed by Mr. Fleming as "the paraphernalia of tropical mumbo jumbo." He tells us that when the time came he found he had not the face to make the most of them. So – as, after all, a gifted writer has to take a definite line – he makes the least of them. Those famous ticks – they make you feel tropical and intrepid, of course, but if they die on you, and to the extent of jaws and head die in you, you are none the worse. Snakes – Mr. Fleming saw no snake in the interior. Alligators – "the alligator is a fraud." His cunning and toxicity are all my eye and Sir John Mandeville." Indians – those he collogued with were "a nice, cheerful, rather silly people, children in most things." The man-eating fish – the Brazilians are so courteous themselves that one is glad to recognize in Mr. Fleming a corresponding courtesy when he discusses their treasured piranhas; for himself, when his going by water took the form of long stretches of wading he was never attacked: –

> Sometimes, if we stood still, a small shoal, a kind of deputation, would approach and hang diffidently suspended in the translucent water, staring at our legs with a wistful and perhaps a slightly covetous awe: as shop-girls gaze at the sentries outside Buckingham Palace.

But he makes excuses for the inactivity of the piranhas – perhaps they did not "smell blood." Besides, in those parts Old Etonian blood would have ranked as blue blood, not as the specially red and specially appetizing blood of the inverted commas explorer.

But why all this pudency – the Tapirapé country is blank on the map! Mr. Fleming had no option. Even at the risk of saying the wrong think one has been obliged to call him gifted as a writer. He has style, both in the sense of being exact and fastidious in his use of words and also in expressing through them his own vivid personality; and as a writer of style he knew better than to adopt in his exposition a strain that would compete with the exordium thrust upon him. For he went to Brazil on an errand beyond the imaginings of Rider Haggard. The Old Etonian writhes under the inverted commas romance of it all. He went to solve the mystery of the disappearance of Colonel Fawcett.

In the jungle of Matto Grosso there are "amazing ruins of ancient cities – ruins incomparably older than those in Egypt"; so wrote Colonel Fawcett, who based his assertion on a document, some 200 years old, discovered in the archives at Rio de Janeiro. Mystic and man of action, Colonel Fawcett appears to have been the ideal explorer. Accompanied by two young men he went into the jungle in search of the ruined city; his camp fire was seen by Indians for five days or eleven days, according to their system of enumeration; and then the jungle swallowed him up. An expedition was organized to find him or ascertain his fate. Mr. Fleming joined it as Special Correspondent of *The Times*. But he had first heard of it through the Agony Column. It found no trace of Colonel Fawcett; the arrangements and leadership were such that the sensitive Mr. Fleming was always aware of "the miasma of anti-climax." So there was nothing for it but to describe the thing as a great "rag." But as exploration is always breaking in perhaps it will not be putting it too high to say that Mr. Fleming and his young friends went very well.

to the editor

The SPD in Exile

Sir, – Anthony Glees's *Exile Politics during the Second World War* was a great disappointment to me and I feel even more disappointed now, when not even the most glaring mistakes, misunderstandings and mistranslations in the book are mentioned by your reviewer (July 15), who adds some mistakes of his own. For example, it is incorrect that Denis Healey as International Secretary of the Labour Party "had to proceed warily as late as 1948 in getting [the new leader of the German Social Democrats Kurt] Schumacher an invitation to visit Britain": Schumacher had received such an invitation before Healey's term of office and had already visited London in December 1946. It is incorrect that the Labour Party had "since 1933 . . . maintained close contact with its German comrades" and "encouraged them to come to Britain". There was hardly any contact at all, as long as the SPD leadership was in exile in Prague (1933–37) and Paris (1938–40). Henley's predecessor William Gillies (1873–1958) was, however, in spite of his pronounced dislike of everything German, extremely helpful at the end of 1940 in rescuing most of the SPD leaders from France and bringing them to Britain. (From my own experience I would like to add that he had shown the same degree of international solidarity two years earlier, after Munich, to Czechoslovakia's own German Social Democrats). But it never "suited the British Government to patronize them as a possible German government in exile". When Hans Vogel, party leader between 1939 and 1945, and Erich Ollenhauer, later party leader from 1952 until his death in 1963, heading allegedly "an impressive group", in December 1939 paid their only (abortive) visit to the Foreign Office, Gladwyn Jebb noted his inability to catch the second visitor's name. For Gillies the SPD refugees were a human not a political problem, and the Foreign Office never had any form of political cooperation in mind. Incidentally, the Austrian Bruno Kreisky had been living in Sweden since 1938 and had nothing whatever to do with exile politics in Britain.

Glees is, however, correct in stating that from 1941 onwards even the noncommittal benevolence of the Labour Party and the Foreign Office towards the German Social Democrats disappeared – the idea that these might be one day Britain's most valuable allies as representatives of a new German democracy, did not cross anybody's mind. Glees is especially right (p164) to criticize the absence of any independent Labour Party line on Germany. Unfortunately, however, neither he nor your reviewer seems to be able to find the reason for this change of mind, especially obnoxious in the case of the Labour Party treating their own German comrades as non-existent. Glees sometimes mentions but never explains the phenomenon of "Vansittartism", which led to the abandonment of the original official theory that this was a war against the German régime and not against the German people as such. Under the impact of Vansittart's theory about the non-existence of "another Germany" hardly anybody – with the honourable exception of Victor Gollancz and (less well known) Sidney Silverman – wanted to be denounced as "pro-German".

This was the first blow against Hitler's German victims, who were allowed to survive in Britain but nothing else. Much more devastating, but not mentioned by Glees, was the second blow when, from 1943 onwards, the Communists adopted, in accordance with the Moscow line, an attitude of shrill hyper-Vansittartism, denouncing anybody calling for solidarity with German political opponents of Nazism as pro-German agents, bent on destroying inter-allied unity between London, Washington and Moscow. Victor Gollancz remained alone in his unshakable humanism. For the sake of the numerically insignificant (it seemed) German Social Democrats nobody was prepared to accept the blame of even endangering the war aims of the Allies. I vividly remember how I failed to mobilize in a long interview in August 1945 Professor Laski's help – he was at that moment Chairman of the Labour Party's National Executive – for his German comrades in Czechoslovakia who had been lumped together with the Nazis, their deadly enemies. The unwillingness to do anything which could infuriate Moscow was the final reason for the political failure of the German Social Democrats in exile.

J. W. BRUEGEL.

21 Connaught Drive, London NW11.

Thomas Wyatt

Sir, – In their *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thompson give the following text of one of Wyatt's finest epigrams (No. CCXLI):

> Luckes, my faire falcon, and your fellowes all,
> How wel pleasaunt ye were your libertie!
> Ye do not forsake me tha[t] fain[e] might ye
> But they that somtyme lykt my companye
> Lyke lyes awaye from dede bodies thei
> Loe what a profe in light adversytei
> But ye, my birdes, I swear by all your
> belles,
> Ye be my fyrndes, and so be but few elles.

In accordance with their principles, the editors reproduce the spelling of the manuscript (Hill MS Add 36529), but provide their own punctuation. Joost Daalder's punctuation in his "modernized" edition (OUP, 1975) does not differ significantly from that of Muir and Thomson, except in placing a comma at the end of line 3.

However, it seems likely that lines 2 and 3 mean "However pleasing your freedom would be to you, you do not forsake me for your own benefit"; and that the punctuation should bring out that sense. (I take "yt" to be in apposition to "libertie".) Among other examples of "how" in the sense of "however" or "albeit" the *OED* has: "IV. †14 1481. CAXTON *Reynard* (Arb.) 38 How wel that he had supposed that he had made al faste I was not so moche a fool but that I fonde the hole wel."

F. T. PRINCE.

32 Brookvale Road, Southampton.

'Semantic Anthropology'

Sir, – Surpisingly, perhaps, I sympathize with T. O Beidelman's difficulties in reporting what "*semantic* anthropology", is (review of *Semantic Anthropology*, edited by David Parkin, July 8). As stated in the preface to the book, semantic anthropology *is* social anthropology, in which ethnography provides its major theoretical inspirations, which can be as varied as the number of societies studied and as ethnographers' interpretations allow. Beidelman concedes this inspirational value of ethnography and his own work has been an exemplar. However, he misses the relevance here of the point that recurs throughout the volume: that social anthropologists frequently do *not* separate the influence of their theoretical language on their interpretations from the understandings that peoples themselves have of their own activities. Certainly, there can be too much self-reflection, and reaching an illuminating balance is a craft. Beidelman's own phraseology suggests that he sees ethnographic "data" as pieces of behaviour or belief out there awaiting the beachcomber's scrutiny and sieve. However, the question must always be asked: why is it that a chance event, which the ethnographer happens to witness, so often becomes the pivot of an analysis of the whole society? How, in other words, can the apparently random encounter, which clearly was not planned by the ethnographer, become the interpretative inspiration for a whole book, often resulting in discrepant accounts of the same society by equally competent ethnographers? This is a problem of translation which is of a quite different order to those with which we are familiar and which remain important.

Far from leading to dry epistemological debates about the inadequacy of functionalist, structuralist, or post-structuralist explanations, the accounts of such transformations of chance into apparent regularity can be an intriguing part of ethnographic description. The personalized anthropology that this may entail should not be overdone. Rather, it should be seen as an authorial corrective to an easy acceptance of the usual range of analytical dichotomies which so readily shape the final picture which emerges. So it is that those perennial oppositions of langue/parole, essence/appearance, materialist/idealist, subject/object, linguistic/social, and others, are not necessarily discarded but are first filtered through the language and ideas of those we study and are accordingly re-cast. This deconstructivist enterprise, initiated in this country by Rodney Needham, does not lead to sterile cultural relativism. On the contrary, it helps reveal the overlaps of thinking that link cultures, even if it does not lead to the universals sought by standardizers of humanity.

Further to this, Beidelman argues that a consideration of power is absent from the collection. In fact it is explicitly dealt with in the last section of the introduction. More importantly it is implicit in an exploration of their own assumptions by many of the authors. Thus, power can certainly refer to the effects of neo-colonialism, class formation, and changing modes of production. Who would deny this? But it is also inherent in the small things of life: the misunderstood gesture, the tone of voice, the tacit understanding, the use of names, etc. Interpreting them cross-culturally is itself a part of the very discourse to which academics have privileged access in writing about peoples who rarely have the opportunity to reply. Can one really separate these as different kinds of power rather than as refractions of a totality?

Some of these are indeed issues raised by Evans-Pritchard and R. G. Collingwood, as Beidelman observes. But, during the intervening period of often brilliant structuralist theorizing, ethnographers have rarely responded to this epistemological challenge from the viewpoint of themselves as part of those whom they describe. If, as Beidelman claims, this is distinctly British and definitely un-American, then so be it. The ecumenical embrace was well intentioned.

DAVID PARKIN.

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Incident in the Congo

Sir, – I refer to your reviewer's quotation from Sandy Gall's *Don't Worry about the Money Now* (July 8) in which Mr Gall claimed I attempted to make away with his aircraft in the Congo in 1960. This allegation is false, and my lawyers have a letter from the publishers assuring me that it will not be repented in any subsequent impression or edition.

The truth of that particular episode is that I saved Sandy Gall's and George Gale's lives. But of that, more later and elsewhere.

TOM STACEY.

128 Kensington Church Street, London W8.

Author, Author

Competition No 133

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 19. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 133" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 26.

1 One day the Nouns were clustered in the Street.
An Adjective walked by, with her dark beauty,
The Nouns were struck, moved, changed,
The next day a Verb drove up, and created a Sentence.

2 You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050!

3 The first Project was to shorten Discourse by cutting Polysyllables into one, and leaving out Verbs and Participles; because in Reality all things imaginable are but Nouns.

Competition No 129

Winner: Bernard Latham-Green

Answers:

1 Who, when he saw the first Sand or Ashes, by a casual Intenseness of Heat melted into a Metalline Form, rugged with Excrescences, and clouded with Impurities, would have imagined, that in this formless Lump lay concealed so many Conveniences of Life, as would in time constitute a great Part of the Happiness of the World? Yet by some such fortuitous Liquefaction was Mankind taught to procure a Body at once in a high Degree solid and transparent, which might admit the Light of the Sun, and exclude the Violence of the Wind . . .

Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 9.

2 . . . and my Father had a genius for instruction. Miss Wilkes was never weary of expressing what a revelation of the wonderful works of God in creation her acquaintance with us had been. She would gaze through the microscope at awful forms, and would persevere until the silver rim which marked the confines of the drop of water under inspection would ripple inwards with a flash of light and vanish, because the drop itself had evaporated.

Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, chapter 7.

3 I lift a field itself
As lightly as I might a shelf,
And the rooks do not rage
Caught for a moment in my crystal cage.

Andrew Young, "Field-Glasses".

Among this week's contributors

NIGEL ALEXANDER is Professor of English Language and Literature at Queen Mary College, London.

T. W. C. BLANNING's most recent book, *The French Revolution in Germany*, will be published next month.

D. J. BOHM is the author of *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980.

ROBERT BROWNING is Emeritus Professor of Classics at Birkbeck College, London.

LORD CARVER's recent books include *War Since 1945*, 1980.

NEIL CORCORAN's study of David Jones, *The Song of Deeds*, was published last year.

KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND's collections of poems include *The Rain Giver*, 1973.

JOHN D'ARMS is Chairman of the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Michigan, and author of *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome*, 1981.

RUSSELL DAVIES is television correspondent of *The Sunday Times*.

DENNIS DELETANT is lecturer in Romanian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London.

TOM DISCH's most recent book, *Burn This*, was published last year.

D. J. ENRIGHT's collection of essays, *A Mania for Sentences* was published earlier this month.

KYRIL FITZLYON's books include *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's biography of Vita Sackville-West will be published later this year.

JOHN GRIGG's *Nancy Astor: Portrait of the Pioneer* was published in 1980.

ROBERT HEWISON is editor of *New Approaches to Ruskin: Thirteen Essays*, 1981.

R. V. HOLLOWORTH's edition of Ben Jonson's *Epicene* was published in 1979.

MICHAEL HUNTER's books include *The Royal Society and its Fellows 1660–1700*, 1982.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London.

FRANK JOHNSON is the author of *Out of Order*, 1982.

BERNARD KNOX is Director of the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington DC.

MAURICE LARKIN is Richard Pares Professor of History at the University of Edinburgh.

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DAVID NOKES is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's *History of the 1945–51 Labour Government* will be published early next year.

LIONEL PIKE is the author of *Beethoven, Sibelius, and 'The Profound Logic'*, 1978.

SIR BRIAN PIPPARD's *The Physics of Vibration* Volume 2 was published last year.

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DAVID PROFUMO is Deputy Editor of *The Fiction Magazine*.

DERRICK PUFFETT is a Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford.

CHRISTOPHER REID's collection of poems, *Pea Soup*, was published in 1982.

ALAN ROSS's *Colours of War: A study of war art 1939–45* was published last month.

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Jonathan Cape

commentary



A. C. Swinburne as seen by Harry Furniss: a caricature from the exhibition reviewed here.

Restless revenants

Peter Kemp

Shades of Darkness
ITV

Granada's series, *Shades of Darkness*, gave substantial coverage to the supernatural. Fleshing out seven ghost stories into well-rounded plays, it resurrected period styles with uncanny fidelity and conjured up a fascinating range of baleful atmospheres.

Despite the diversity of writers drawn upon – from Edith Wharton to Walter de la Mare – similar motifs kept materializing. Chief among these was the sequestered setting. Houses that were old and isolated – remote from the communal and contemporary, and unspoiled by such ghost-dispelling inconveniences as electricity – provided the most popular locales. Being off the beaten track seemed a prerequisite for spectral visitation. L. P. Hartley's *Feet Foremost* worked an inventive variation on this formula: here, a sixteenth-century hall was not only physically cut off but also psychically beleaguered – besieged by a crippled and malevolent apparition who, if unknowingly carried in across the threshold, ensured that a corpse was soon being carried out across it.

Though settings tended to be out of the ordinary, normality was favoured for the central figures – down-to-earth observers who threw weird goings-on into relief as well as lending credibility to them. The ghosts they glimpsed – a varied bunch, from heart-broken child to a squashed woodcutter – generally seemed to flow from someone's emotional obsession, with sex unleashing particularly vibrant forces: a destroyed lover was at the centre of *The Maze*; the revengeful revenant in *Feet Foremost* was an outraged bride; *The Intercessor* and *Bewitched* circled round infidelities of various kinds.

Of the pieces dramatized, those by Edith Wharton had greatest re-verberation. Writing once about her attraction to the ghost story genre, she referred to her "intense Celtic sense of the super-natural", and recalled how reading a terror-tale when she was ill with typhoid left her feverishly susceptible to such works for long afterwards: "till I was twenty-seven or eight, I could not sleep in the room with a book containing a ghost-story. . . . I have frequently had to burn books of this kind, because it frightened me to know that they were downstairs in the library!" The writing of her own ghost stories was perhaps intended to allay such lingering fears: a noticeable feature of the three here dramatized was that the ghosts were far less ghastly than the living. *The Lady's Maid's Bell*, the first supernatural story Edith Wharton wrote, obviously emanated from her own miserable marriage: hovering protectively round her sensitive mistress like some guardian angel, the spirit of a devoted servant tries to shield her from her husband's loveless crudities. A shoddy spouse also figured in *Afterward*, where financial shadiness attracted spectral retribution. *Bewitched* – rather weakened in its transfer to the screen – is an obliquely revealing tale. Set in the same icy New England countryside as *Ethan Frome*, it derives much of its chillingness from glacial landscapes: stretches of snow under eerie green twilights, pine-trunks purpled by the dropping sun. As in *Ethan Frome* too, the physical desolation is an apt background to lives of emotional frigidity. Psychologically numbed herself by the coldness she encountered both as a child and as a wife, Wharton enters into this world with bitter imaginative intensity. In *Bewitched*, the spectres of starved need are set swirling through a frost-bound mountain community. By transferring the scene to a Cornish seaside setting, the television version, despite a performance of bloodless ferocity from Eileen Atkins, lost some of the story's harsh resonance.

This distortion was slight, however, compared with that effected upon *Seaton's Aunt* by its adaptor, Ken Taylor. Retailing the way a ghoulish guardian battens on her hapless ward, the story by Walter de la Mare operates through masterly understatement – especially in its closing scenes. There, amid the low-visibility so congenial to the ghost story – thickening twilight and murky suspicions – the narrator comes to fear that the now-dead Seaton is being harried even in the grave by his implacable and seemingly immortal aunt. Taylor's version killed off the aunt; but, to indicate that Seaton was still under her creepy influence, he was shown – in a bizarre, *Psycho*-like scene – sleep-walking in her wig and shawl. This grotesque travesty could hardly have been further from the spirit of the story, and it's curious to speculate as to what possessed its perpetrator.

Satirical sittings

Russell Davies

Harry Furniss 1854–1925: Confessions of a Caricaturist
National Portrait Gallery

It is only right that the editorship of the *Tatler* should have fallen, if that's the word, to a caricaturist. For caricaturists are great bob-nobbers. They flirt with their victims, and these respond by buying in the evidence of victimization. The proprietor of a joke acquires immunity from its barbs. So it is a great thing to own, in the original pen-and-ink, the very attack that has been made upon oneself.

The cartoonist-clubman, therefore, is no great rarity. He happens naturally. His mahoganied retreat at the Garrick or Savage gives him the company of policy-makers and opinion-shapers, and if necessary an innocent disguise for the two classic foibles of the comic draughtsman: misogyny and alcoholism. Suffering neither of these disabilities to any visible extent, Harry Furniss (1854–1925) shows forth as gentleman-comedian type at its most serene. As the exhibition *Confessions of a Caricaturist*, at the National Portrait Gallery until September 25, makes plain, Furniss was corpulent and jovial and admirably fitted for a deep armchair; but he escaped from the clubman's world often enough to carry on the untroubled married life that so many of his fellow-professionals have been denied. In the circumstances, Alison Opyrchal's programme-note to the effect that "his domestic life was unremarkable for its stability and happiness" might have been better phrased.

Furniss was Irish-born, from Wexford – just the kind of minimal tinge of outsiderishness that seems to help the satirists of England on their way. Not that Harry had any very burning satirical intent. He was merely a young man with a sense of humour and a facility for drawing, gifts he combined while still at school in a handmade comic magazine called *The Schoolboy's "Punch"*. He worked briefly in Dublin, arrived in London at the age of nineteen, and was soon covering election meetings and suchlike for the *Illustrated London News*. By the 1890s he was *Punch*'s resident Parliamentary artist, and working with Lewis Carroll on the latter's disappointing *Sylvie and Bruno*. He was a member of (at least) the Gaiety, Beefsteak, Savage and Garrick clubs, not to mention the *Punch* table, a club in itself.

Furniss's versatility ran in parallel with – indeed was probably an aspect of – his sociability. He fell in happily with available company; and the same thing happened on the page. His subjects dictated his style. Thus even in a small exhibition of some sixty-odd items, one's first glance picks up little in the way of an encouraging unity. While it would not be true to say that every character depicted by Furniss inhabits a genre of its own, the effect does rather resemble the fabled lovely bunch of coconuts – big ones, small ones, some as big as your head.

Sometimes Furniss's heads are to scale, sometimes they are whoppingly overblown in the style recently repopularized by David Levine. It is noticeable that when he refrains from distorting bodily proportions, Furniss's work can bear quite a close resemblance to that of his contemporary Phil May, who shared his habit – though neither man was consistent about it – of sketching limbs and body boldly, while giving heads a more delicate, ethereal, pencilly treatment. In Furniss's case, one might profitably draw from this the rule "Faint head never won fair opinion"; for surely the most common fault among Furniss's less successful drawings is the disparity between the rather prim Victorian carefulness of the heads and the rumbustious, inky, comedy-of-posture bodies upon which they rest. He seems to have rejoiced in legs especially. Precious few eminent Victorians will have complained of being made to look stunted by Harry Furniss.

The man most fully Furnissed in the present exhibition is Mr Gladstone, whose trousers in real life were indeed encouragingly tubular. His huge stiff collars, besides being unmistakable, occasionally saved the cartoonist a good deal of work, since most of the Gladstonian features could be sunk between the upstanding collar-wings, leaving only a fierce and beadily inscrutable eyes peeping over the top. The ensemble put Furniss in mind of a vulture, and one of his more amusingly inconsequential drawings depicts Gladstone as eight vultures all at once. But the masterpiece hereabouts is Gladstone "Waiting to Spring", where the posture is all hunched forward from his front-bench seat with hands crossed between his legs to grasp the opposite shin – a rare attitude, but somehow deeply familiar, possibly from Indian pow-wows in old cowboy films.

The early years of this century brought Harry Furniss himself into contact with Thomas Edison and the American cinema. He wrote about it, in a book called *Our Lady Cinema* (in fact he wrote so much, by way of commentary and memoir, that one would have thought quite a merry Selected Furniss could be extracted from it all). Returning to England, he produced during the Great War a film of his own: *Peace and War – Pencillings by Harry Furniss*, which has survived and been videotaped to round out what is otherwise a slightly under-cluttered exhibition (the odd item of clubman furniture to bump into would have helped no end).

In the film, Furniss appears with embonpoint and joviality unimpaired, inking away with a berserk recklessness doubtless redoubled by the primitive camera technology. By this time, it would appear from his shape, Furniss had abandoned his habit of ritually bouncing up and down on a vaulting-horse parked for the purpose in his studio. His cartoon of the day was a splashily jingoistic fantasy in which German soldiers have their heads knocked together by a pugilistic Allied kangaroo. The results lack discernible merit of any kind – a reminder that facility, fecundity and slapdash public confidence are virtues rewarded in their own day or not at all. The nearer we come to meeting Furniss in person, the more easily we recognize in him a man whose telegraphic address was "Likajoko, London".

The catalogue to the exhibition is by Alison Opyrchal (23pp, with 17 illustrations. National Portrait Gallery. 50p. 0 9040 17 51 6).

Forthcoming exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery include a large show of the work of William Dobson (1611–1646), *The Royalists at War*; and *Arthur Devis*, a collection of Devis's conversation pieces.

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commentary

Flattered into self-exposure

R. V. Holdsworth

JOHN MARSTON
The Fawn
Cottesloe Theatre

Marstonian satire is an acquired taste. "Lashing the lewdness of *Britannia*", as he puts it in *The Scourge of Villainy*, in order to "purge the snottery of our slimy time", Marston's regular response to human depravity is a state of foaming outrage, fuelled by an assumption that people must be disgusting because they have such disgusting things as bodies. "All things that live must rot", argues Malevole in *The Malcontent*, "this earth 'tis the very muck-hill on which the sublunary orbs cast their excrements, man is the slime of this dung-pit, and princes are the governors of these men". If men behave like dogs ("Quake guzzle dogs, that live on putrid slime"), so will Marston; he is a "barking satirist" "sharp-fanged", whom no muzzle will tame. Such frenzies rapidly pall. They did at the time for the anonymous author of the *Parnassus* plays, who re-applied Marston's canine metaphor by accusing him of "lifting up your leg and pissing against the world", and also for Ben Jonson, who made Marston, as the character Crispinus in *Poetaster*, vomit up his brutal diction into a basin, and recommended that he experiment in future with "fair abstinence".

Parasitaster, or The Fawn – the first part of the title is modelled on *Poetaster* and means "fake parasite" – is a cheering exception to Marston's standard rabid spoutings. The plot is partly to thank for this. A version of the "disguised duke" story which appears at the same date, 1604, in *Measure for Measure* and Middleton's *The Phoenix*, it concerns Hercules, Duke of Ferrara, who sends his son Tiberio to arrange a marriage on his behalf with Dulcimel, daughter of Gonzago Duke of Urbin. Hercules follows to observe the outcome, and, disguised as the Fawn, settles down to study "the giddy sea of humour" which floods the Urbin court; where Gonzago, a garrulous bore, is "gently fanned with the soft gales of his own flatterers' lips". The flatterers include Nymphadoro, who nurtures an Agnecheek-like longing for the princess (though he consoles himself by keeping thirty-nine other ladies in tow); Herod Frappatore, a braggart and the paid lover of the wife of his brother, the sexually exhausted Sir Amoroso Debilé-Dosso; and Zuccone, a jealous buffoon whose wife Donna Zoya, like Shakespeare's Mistress Ford, teaches him a sharp lesson. Instead of a frontal assault, Hercules's technique of correction is to flatter the courtiers into self-exposure, after which they are sent for a voyage on a ship of fools captained by Gonzago's jester, Dondolo. Meanwhile, Dulcimel, a very Shakespearian heroine in her freshness and spirit, finds she prefers Tiberio to the portrait of his ageing father, and secretly woos and wins him, even though he "ever loathed a thought of woman".

The prominence of the love-plot would make Marston's usual whips and scorns out of place ("Where two hearts yield consent, all thwarting's vain", is the message Dulcimel smuggles to Tiberio), and another reason for their absence is the growing influence on Marston of Montaigne, particularly of Montaigne's view that the force of sexual passion must be accepted, though controlled by reason. This permits a decidely unMarstonian endorsement of man's physical nature. Here it is the pompous Gonzago who declares "as we be flesh and blood, alas, we are fools", and his wiser daughter, herself "a creature of a good healthful blood", who rejects "book-thinking creatures" and tells her chaperone to "confer with me like a creature made of flesh and blood". At the end of the play we even hear Hercules, as he watches his son climb the plane tree to Dulcimel's balcony, offer a paean to "genital heats", a phrase which would have different connotations in *The Scourge of Villainy*.

The play's jollity and humanity are marvellously caught in Giles Block's production, apparently the first since the original performance by the Queen's Revels Children at the Blackfriars. The set itself suggests these qualities. It is a courtyard of peach-coloured stone, against an expanse of bright blue sky, at one point darkened and a-twinkle with fireworks for the princess's birthday festivities. Blossoms strew the floor (appropriately, as Dulcimel banters poignantly over a withered flower with Tiberio at their first meeting, and is later called a bud), and the briefly functional plane tree, begirt with cushions and in full leaf, branches up to the galleries. The cast also keep nastiness at bay. Basil Henson's very funny Gonzago is an amiable old buffer without a hint of arrogance, despite the obedient applause which punctuates his sophistries. Karl Johnson's Nymphadoro, in pink doublet and matching garter, is tragically love-lorn, tenderly retrieving Dulcimel's withered flower after she has discarded it, and trotting about at the feast with a large red quaking jelly, a nice emblem of himself (the courtiers generally seem to prefer kiddies' party food to anything that smacks of adult indulgence). The production's dominating role is not the ubiquitous Hercules, an oddly lifeless rendering by Bernard Lloyd, but Miranda Foster's vibrant Dulcimel, quite bellovably fifteen in manner, if not in looks. Only James Hayes's Zuccone, terrorized and twitching, and screaming in horror when his wife's supposed bastard is thrown in the air (it turns out to be a cushion) suggests anything really unpleasant.

Jollification is also behind the production's one major change, the promotion of Dondolo to comic presenter. He speaks the archly audience-flattering prologue, the epilogue, and some of Hercules's lines, and pairs off Hercules with Dulcimel's chaperone at the end (in the text he stays single). At one point he reads from the programme, at another he pops up in the audience to describe the statesmen who are on board his ship of fools – "some long fortunate politicians, some purple fellows whom chance reared, and their own deficiencies of spirit buried down" – when, rather unfairly, he imitates Roy Jenkins. *The Fawn* is actually a bit darker than this. The unmuzzled Marston is sometimes heard, as in the denunciation of the local sewage system ("here in the city a man shall have his excrements in his teeth again within four and twenty hours"), the details of Sir Amoroso's venereal problems ("last morning he blew nine bones out of his nose"), or the sketch of the old lady whose breath is so bad that birds drop down dead as they fly past her. But a dose of *The Scourge of Villainy* will make the lightening bearable.

Female pioneers

Kyril FitzLyon

L'avant-garde au féminin
Artcurial, avenue Matignon, Paris

Russia's startling cultural renaissance in the reign of its last emperor, particularly in the early years of the present century, has often been remarked upon. For a brief moment Russia became, says Camilla Gray in her authoritative history of modern Russian painting, *The Great Awakening*, "a truly international centre of the artistic world", and by about 1911 "the Russians emerged at last as pioneers in the 'modern movement' ". A striking feature of this emergence is the very considerable role, both qualitative and quantitative, played in it by women. This has not been much stressed till now, least of all by the women themselves who did not – in a way which is perhaps more Russian than Western-European – think of their artistic achievement in terms of feminism. One of the most attractive of the Paris art galleries, the Artcurial, calling itself the "Centre d'art plastique contemporain", has set out to remedy the omission.

L'avant-garde au féminin is devoted exclusively to the women participants of the Russian modern movement. Altogether twenty-two artists are represented. No doubt, say the authors of the informative, excellently produced and lavishly illustrated catalogue, Jean-Claude and Valentine Marcadé, these twenty-two are the most important of the Russian women-painters of the time, but if the organizers had had their way, they would have included over fifty exhibitors. Why is it, ask the Marcadés, that women in Russia participated so extensively and so influentially in their country's artistic upsurge, far more so than anywhere else in the world? Their tentatively suggested answer is that the legal position and educational opportunities of women in Imperial Russia were somewhat in advance of Western Europe at the time, and this may have resulted in their correspondingly greater contribution. (The Marcadés' more fanciful additional suggestion refers to "les vestiges d'un matriarcat archaïque", but wisely they leave it with a question mark. Two or even three question marks would have been wiser still.)

The oldest of the exhibitors, though not as old as the catalogue makes her out to be (she was born in 1870, not in 1860, and died in 1938), is Marianna Veriovkina, more widely known as Marianne von Werefkin. She spent many years in Munich, that alternative Mecca – alternative to Paris, that is – of Russian artists at the turn of this century, and was able to exert a considerable influence on her compatriot and contemporary in Munich, Kandinsky, as regards both his paintings and his ideas expressed in his famous treatise *On the Spiritual in Art*.

A role analogous to Veriovkina's in Munich is claimed for Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) in Paris where she spent most of her life, but kept her Russian contacts and liked to speak of "the Slav tonality" of her colours. By this she meant the blues, reds and saffron yellows which she so freely used in her numerous abstract paintings (many shown in this exhibition) and which she remembered seeing in the gaily-coloured objects of everyday use made by peasants in her native Ukraine.

A much more significant and more influential figure undoubtedly is Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962), who tried her hand at a variety of art forms – sculpture, stage décor (in the West she is probably best remembered for her *Le Coq d'Or* designs for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes), dress designing, a new form of book illustration, tied to the text stylistically as well as thematically, and painting on all kinds of material, including the human face. The first artistic influence she consciously absorbed, like most Russian painters of her time, was French Impressionism, but fairly early in her career she "shook off the dust of the West from her feet" (her own characteristic expression) and turned to native Russian art, deriving her inspiration from icons and *lubki* (prints somewhat akin to chap-books). In the exhibition, which includes some of her designs for *Le Coq d'Or*, she is perhaps most effectively represented by her Rayonist works (1912–13), based on the theory that "the eye does not see actual objects, but only the rays emanating from them" and responsible for laying the foundations of Russian abstract painting.

There is, unfortunately, no space here to comment on all the participants of the exhibition. But it is impossible not to mention Liubov Popova (1889–1924) and Nadezhda Oudaltsova (1886–1961) whose Suprematist and Constructivist designs, of which the exhibition provides several striking examples, were and still are highly regarded and had considerable influence in their day. Alexandra Exter (1882–1949), the pioneer of Russian Futurism in sets and costumes for the theatre, is represented by seven items including a photograph of a scene from Tairov's production of Annensky's *Thamyris the Citharoedus*, for which she designed scenery and costumes. It ran in Moscow's Kamerny Theatre in the beginning of 1917. Such was the success obtained by the *mise-en-scène* that, according to a contemporary critic, the public's interest in it competed with the excitement aroused by the speeches of Parliamentary leaders warning the nation of Imperial Russia's imminent collapse and the inevitability of revolution.

The exhibition contains 181 items in all, of which 154 are pictures and the rest books illustrated by women artists of the period. The books are particularly welcome since they emphasize the equality of partnership of literature and plastic arts in a country where literature had for a long time led the way and imposed on plastic arts both its values and its themes. In fact, it could justly be said that painting and graphics had by then, for the first though short time in Russia, gained a slight edge on the literary expression of ideas. It may be worth adding that the catalogue's sub-title: "Moscou – Saint-Pétersbourg – Paris 1909–1930" is slightly misleading since the earliest exhibit, a charcoal sketch by Sonia Delaunay, goes back to 1904, while the latest, a water colour by Tatiana Glebova, is dated 1934, and many of the artists had never lived or exhibited in Paris or anywhere else in France. Tragically, what most, though not all, of them have in common is their rejection by their own country and their consequent exile after the Revolution so many of them had welcomed.

To commemorate the centenary of Manet's death, the National Gallery is to mount, from August 10 to October 9, an exhibition called *Manet at Work*, which will bring together about twenty-five works – oils, pastels, etchings, lithographs and drawings. Four major paintings – "Music in the Tuileries Gardens", "The Waitress", "The Execution of Maximilian" and "Portrait of Eva Gonzalès" – will be discussed in detail and shown with related sketches and prints. A photographic reconstruction of "The Waitress" shows how it was once part of a larger composition. One part of the exhibition centres on images of war, with drawings and lithographs of soldiers. There will also be a course of eight lectures.

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How beastly the bourgeois is

D. J. Enright

CHRISTER KIHLMAN
Sweet Prince
Translated by Joan Tate
232pp. Peter Owen. £8.95.
0 7206 0606 3

This novel, written in Swedish by a Finn, has been "accepted in the European Series of the Translations Collection of UNESCO". Since (to go no further) the "C" has something to do with culture, it ought to be a pretty good book.

The hero is announced as "healthy, content and sober", which promises originality. He is also rich. "It was not exactly yesterday he had worried over how his money was to suffice." That, we suppose, is an instance of litotes. "He had had five wives, three in legal matrimony, and a great many other women as well." Hardly litotes again; but possibly pleonasm – or, in implying the existence of illegal matrimony, even oxymoron? In either case, "his habits, except when it came to women, were more spartan than dissolute": which means that he no longer confines himself to pheasant, venison, vintage wine, but nowadays prefers "cabbage rolls and cranberry sauce, or black-pudding and a glass of non-fat milk". All this on page one. Later the hero tells us that "nothing is more nourishing than a woman's love, and in that respect I have been fortunate". He hardly needed black-pudding and non-fat milk.

He also tells us that he is "an incurable connoisseur of the parts of a woman's body her panties conceal". This may be a case of euphemistic expression; but the question remains, how would one go about curing a connoisseur? His connoisseurship, incidentally, is seen in his appreciation of a stripper: "She had a very lovely white tail, with oblong buttocks like pumpkins."

At times like this, the reviewer begins to fear that the reading of books, new books, has damaged his brain, and he had better turn himself in before he does something awful, like running amok in a public library. He will not be reassured by such psychosomatic phenomena as the sudden veering from one typeface into another and the alternation of heavily inked lines with passages so faint as to be barely legible. Do these things have a hidden significance? Dear God, let them signify! But no, it's the nuthouse for him.

Sweet Prince – an inept title, unless one conceives of *Hamlet* solely in terms of Eliot's diagnosis: intense feeling lacking an adequate object – is the memoirs of one Donald Bladh, a caretaker's child, related on the wrong side of the blanket to an old, distinguished and well-heeled Finnish family. Or, he informs us, his defence: which is doomed to failure in that he is patently indefensible, of a "violent and insolent temperament" and given to recommending such banal antimorals as that cheating is a better policy than honesty. As a youth, discharged from the army and finding that his mother (who supposed him dead) had given his clothes away, he "was very upset and felt a need to see blood" – so he kicked to death a passing lieutenant who expected a salute. Good or bad?

Bladh has risen from these miserable beginnings to quite abysmal heights, becoming a prosperous businessman and (incredibly) Minister of Defence, though not for long since he proposed to disband the armed forces. Mind you, it hasn't been all work and no play. "A day without sex has been a wasted day . . . I have been a connoisseur of cunts." His wives have all been profitable investments, yielding useful political contacts, knowledge of music and literature, social *savoir-faire* – but also, which he is less happy about, children. "Moral niceties", he remarks in another gem of understatement, "have never been my field." Yet can it be a case of *corruptio optimi pessima*? Has Bladh, an erstwhile Communist, been corrupted by the ugly-faced capitalism which (you might think from this account) he has himself virtually invented? That he has shown precious little sign of ever being among "the best" is no doubt beside the point. During a vignette of family life, one of his sons observes, "You crapped a great turd on your origins and joined the capitalist exploiters. Have you ever thought what a class-traitor bastard you are?"

Bad language doesn't of course exclude "significance", heavy doses of which are injected into the novel like silicone into those parts of a woman's body which her bra is meant to conceal. Thus, of the audience at a live-sex show in Stockholm:

> This was the World of Men in its grotesque, distorted, perhaps also tragic meaning. They sat there in their armchairs, their eyes rigidly turned towards the curtain, soon to be drawn back to reveal new sensations, now inflammatory or frustrating voyeuristic experiences. They tried to hide their faces in this way, by keeping their eyes rigid . . . They were ashamed. They were not at home here. Reluctantly and with beating pulse, they had been driven here by a force stronger than their inherent decency and petit bourgeois instincts.

After several pages of what might not unfairly be classed as pornographic writing, we are brought sternly to book: such goings-on illustrate "the most revolting results of the supreme rule of the capitalist principle of profitability in the world of bourgeois culture". More specifically Bladh is reflecting on low-budget blue movies which feature "men and women long past their youth, their bodies already having lost the vigour and firmness that make them attractive to look at", men and women fighting "a desperate and excruciatingly obvious and manifestly uneven struggle against humiliation, shame, and the merciless ghost of impotence". Plainly not the kind of fare fit for a connoisseur of oblong buttocks.

Included in the story's casualty list are a daughter (named Rosa, after Rosa Luxemburg) who died of a drug overdose in London, a drunken and unwashed drop-out son, and another son, Miles, who has just embezzled three million Finnish marks, and at once confessed to it. All is made clear by the letter Miles leaves when he kills himself. First, however, the reader has to plough through all the reasons for which Miles is *not* about to kill himself, and they are legion. We gather that the embezzled money has been deposited in a Swiss bank, with instructions for its use placed in the safe keeping of the Worker's Bank of Finland. Later it is revealed that the money is to finance the equipping of a people's army "in a particular country". Still later, that the particular country is – Finland.

Noble son of an ignoble father, Miles kills himself because "I'm sick and tired of being bourgeois. I can no longer endure being a bourgeois intellectual, an intellectual humanist." (So that is what he was?) Yet his belief in the cause and in its final victory is pure and fervent. "Communism corresponds to the world everyone has always dreamt of, in which solidarity is master, where love decides and oppression and need do not exist." Since – with the exception of the sweetly idealistic words of the deceased Miles – the book (first published in 1975, by the way) is thick with gloom, squalor, irrationality, lovelessness, contentlousness and windy philosophizing, it would not appear that the bourgeoisie needs to worry overmuch.

Of what, then, is *Sweet Prince* "representative"? Of (can it be?) Finnish/Swedish literature? Of (one still hopes not) Finnish life? Perhaps merely representative of a lot of books that somehow get published these days: representative in its solemn pretensions (psychosocial history), its political gestures (poor boy makes it to the top), its confused morality (poor rich boy has it both ways), and its generous chunks of subsequently denounced sex (author has it both ways). Also – for I cannot believe the translator is to be held wholly responsible – in the wretched quality of the writing. Such representativeness now bears an official seal.

Protean and picaresque

Paul Keegan

ROMAIN GARY
King Solomon
Translated by Barbara Wright
256pp. Harvill Press. £7.95.
0 00 261416 2

GEORGES SIMENON
The Long Exile
Translated by Eileen Ellenbogen
365pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 10762 8

"I've had a lot of fun. Goodbye and thank you" is how Romain Gary signed off his literary suicide note, a document which astounded *tout Paris* when it appeared in 1980. Entitled the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar", it revealed that Gary, a successful novelist and Goncourt Prize winner, was also the author and onlie begetter of four best-selling novels supposedly written by Emile Ajar. "Ajar" never existed; nor was he a pseudonym in the usual sense, but an autonomous voice which for a decade coexisted with Gary's own literary persona; Gary continued publishing novels under his own name while writing as Ajar.

At some level Gary evidently did enjoy himself, but the cost of impersonation and the sense of a Faustian pact inform the mood of all the Ajar novels, particularly the last and most cunningly autobiographical, *L'Angoisse du Roi Salomon*. By translating it loosely as *King Solomon* Barbara Wright has sacrificed a title of some nicety, for the novel concerns a philanthropist. Philanthropy may be the last refuge or protest of the Sincere Man. With Sartrean fearlessness Gary uses it to explore the dilemma of the individual who puts on a role even as he believes in it. The relationship between ventriloquy and despair which is hinted at as a motive for suicide in the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar" is addressed at length in *King Solomon*, which makes it appropriate that both texts are brought together in this volume. Moreover, it seems plausible that the need for "creative self-renewal" which inspired Gary to become "Ajar" was also a search for a voice which could express the sense of an ending and formulate the terminal anguish which is peculiar to these novels.

The octagenarian Solomon Rubinstein, former king of the ready-to-wear clothes trade, has become in old age a benefactor of mankind and proprietor of SOS, a Parisian nightline for the lonely and unhappy. On the surface, philanthropy is Solomon's *daimon*, as consuming a passion as any of the traditional fictional archetypes of daimonic behaviour, such as the gambler or the collector, both of whom he resembles. Solomon gambles his largesse randomly, if discreetly; he collects photographs and old postcards – junk dealers reserve those written with the most emotion – because he likes to honour the anonymous dead. The ironic inscrutability with which Solomon chooses those whom he helps borders on the gratuitous, and in his arbitrary pieties and combative attachment to the outmoded and the obsolete he is something of a surrealist.

Solomon recruits Jean – the narrator – as a youthful protégé and alter-ego, because Jean has an old-fashioned face. A born humanitarian, Jean nevertheless looks like a throwback to a celluloid and musical culture which deified the thug. His first mission is to visit the ancient Mlle Cora Lamenaire, once the doyenne of the *chanson réaliste*, a forgotten genre whose songs were noted for their obligatory unhappy endings. The hint of thuggery is not lost on her, and she falls for Jean because he looks like a remake of Jean Gabin ("a face made for love"). Jean encourages her out of love for his fellow-men, because she epitomizes all that is most endangered in the human species. He keeps a photograph of her under his pillow which in fact depicts a Breton seagull bogged down in an oil slick. For Jean, as for Solomon, the human fraternity includes nature. As no one should ever be despised or humiliated, Jean becomes Cora's lover. It is there that the redemptive project breaks down, for Cora's age inspires in him a physical revulsion "which made it not a woman snuggling up to me but a guy – and I had homosexual repugnances". He is so repelled that he has an erection and copulates with her with a perverse vigour, thereby living up to her Jean Gabin fantasies. He subsequently refers to his act as "cruelty to animals".

The Nietzschean assertion that as a moral being the individual must yield to the sovereignty of another's needs is here confronted by a corollary: that such a morality requires the performance of an actor. Jean's philanthropic act is a piece of contorted histrionics, an inversion of the natural order, the domain of indifference and oblivion. Hence Solomon's obscure anguish (Jean is merely a second self, a proxy phallus) that his philanthropy can never come as naturally as the leaves to the tree.

The recognition of the moral nature as at best protean reflects Gary's own shyly inserted preoccupations. In the "Life and Death of Emile Ajar" he offers two reasons for becoming Ajar: a nostalgic urge for renewal, and the capitulation to "the oldest protean temptation of man, that of multiplicity". Both undergo a sea-change in *King Solomon*: in Solomon's self-renewal by philanthropic attachment to the things of this world, and in his vicarious largesse. Moreover, Solomon's nostalgic attempt to redeem time is a reflection on popular art: its quietism and inbuilt obsolescence combined with the forces latent in "atmosphere" and in the songs once heard upon everyone's lips. In some sense Gary reviews a career as a popular writer. All these preoccupations are far from integrated in *King Solomon*; rather they lie side by side, and the novel is puzzling and private – the cryptic farewell of an old hand.

As Ajar, Gary tried to escape from a certain image of himself, but he denied that the Ajar novels were meant to differ in kind from the others. In fact, his readers sensed thematic and stylistic affinities. Only the critics claimed that a different order of art was involved, and praised Ajar at the expense of Gary whenever the question of resemblances was raised. Unlike Simenon, who longed for immortality and hankered after strange fictional gods (Faulkner, Conrad), Gary's faith in the common reader remained unshakeable to the end, perhaps because his sense of his public was more intellectual than Simenon's. Gary wished to remain a popular novelist, and his intention as Ajar was to play concealed variations on the conventions, not to outstrip them.

Written in 1936, *The Long Exile* is one of Simenon's exotic *romans durs* – an ambitious psychological thriller without a Maigret or even a strong plot. The narrative is loose and open-ended, as it drifts and merges disturbingly with the picaresque trajectory of its characters. The story concerns a trio: Jef and Charlotte – who are fleeing retribution for a murder committed in Paris – and Captain Mopps, who smuggles them on board his ship in return for Charlotte's favours. After a horrific year in the Columbian jungle, the couple, now with a child, manage to rejoin Mopps in Tahiti, where the circumstantial harmony of their previous arrangement is destroyed because neither the cynical Mopps nor the ingenuous Jef knows which of the two is the father. A study has yet to be written on the uses of foreign soil in the realist novel, and the paradoxical narratives of loss which it engenders. In *The Long Exile* Columbia is a prison-house of vegetation and Tahiti a garden of delights, yet the one inspires a kind of doomed heroism and the other serves only to illustrate Goethe's dictum that nothing is harder to bear than a succession of fair days.

Despite its portentousness, at moments the novel retains an expressive economy reminiscent of the Maigret books; when Jef lies dying of tuberculosis he thinks of having the child X-rayed and is struck by the afterthought: "It would be evidence of a kind – that the child was really his." Simenon's enduring art of the surface, and the popular notion of art as being inherently tied to a quick grasp (which he exploited so unerringly in the Maigret novels), are capable of a compression usually denied the psychological narratives which he aspired to later on. It is the plain style of the early Simenon, unrhetorical to the point of muteness, which has a genuine affinity with the Conrad of the "simple tale".

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Originally published in 1959 and 1969 respectively, and now appearing in Britain for the second time (not, as the publishers claim, the first), *Mrs Bridge* and *Mr Bridge* are set chiefly among the country-club crowd of Kansas City during the 1930s. Despite the intervening years, the lifestyle depicted remains essentially that described by Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* back in 1899: a parallel emphasized when, eighty-one pages into *Mrs Bridge*, Evan S. Connell's eponymous heroine chances upon Veblen's treatise in her local bookstore.

Each novel comprises a mosaic of brief episodes, chronologically arranged, from its central character's life. Mr Bridge, a prosperous lawyer, spends long hours money-grubbing, seeing his wife and three children mainly at the dinner-table; Mrs Bridge, an "office widow", struggles with the problem of occupying her hollow days. The usual time-fillers are denied her. Naturally, she does not have a job; a maid takes care of the housework; the children, maturing, do not depend on her. What's left is shopping and a round of inconsequential socializing with similar wives of similar husbands. Various attempts to transcend this deadly routine – through good causes, learning Spanish, improving her vocabulary, painting lessons – prove merely short-lived enthusiasms. Connell's gentle satire tends to understate just how mediocre a creature Mrs Bridge is: the acme of conventionality, unremarkable in everything but her Christian name – India. Blandly pleasant, resolutely uncontroversial, she prefers not to think about the unpleasant things in life; encountering unfamiliar opinions, she retreats with a nervous smile. Every decision is made for her by dominant Mr Bridge; she does once resolve to vote contrary to his instructions, only to lose her nerve in the polling-booth.

To some extent, Mrs Bridge is the product of a masculine caste which perceives women as fragile beings needing insulation against the world. After many years of marriage, Mr Bridge reflects on her "extraordinary naïveté" and realizes that he is partly to blame for it, but by then it is too late for change.

As far as respectability goes, Mr Bridge is very much a masculine version of his wife. His formality is remarked on even by those to whom formality is commonplace; among men, he will be the only one not to laugh at a dirty joke. And though, unlike Mrs Bridge, he does hold strong opinions – being ultra-conservative, antisemitic, anti-black, anti-homosexual – he rarely advances them outside the home. Yet he is a more complex figure altogether. Veblen stated that Leisure Class husbands were driven by status-hunger: the wives "enjoying" opulent inactivity symbolized their worldly success. But Mr Bridge's workaholicism is motivated by an obsessive determination to be entirely different from his father, who made little money and lost that little through unwise investment. In addition, he is preoccupied with securing his family's material welfare after his death (unknown to them, he has heart-trouble). His father left no estate; the same must not befall his dependants. Rationalizing all the evidence to the contrary, Mr Bridge sincerely believes the family to be happy. As his son, Douglas, writes towards the end of *Mrs Bridge*: "He did not ever realize that what we needed was himself instead of what he could give us."

The Bridges both possess a fuzzy half-awareness that life is not all it could be. In different authorial hands, they might have rebelled against the proprieties, like Sinclair Lewis's Carol Kennicott and George Babbitt. But their faith in the correctness of their narrow path through life ultimately remains unshaken. Assorted individualists cross that path for the express purpose of demonstrating the couple's imperviousness to unorthodox influences, Mrs Bridge is implicitly contrasted with argumentative, neurotic Grace Barron, the suburban set's resident misfit and internal critic. Mr Bridge with Alex Sauer, a psychiatrist whose small-scale bohemianism offends Bridge's notion of how a professional man should comport himself. A central event of both novels is the Bridges' trip to Europe, which serves merely to reinforce their confidence in the superiority of the Middle-American way.

A recurrent theme concerns the upbringing of the Bridge children. Husband and wife are heavy parents; Mrs Bridge, in particular, strives to combat any manifestations of nonconformity. In reaction, the eldest child, Ruth, acquires a reputation for promiscuity and, after graduating from high school, opts for a freer time of things in New York. Carolyn, conversely, grows into an archetypal Leisure Class woman. After committing the error of marrying outside that class, she is appalled at being expected to clean and cook. She prefers to play golf all day. Only the youngest child, the quirky Douglas, seems unscathed, replacing one minor eccentricity with another in his own good time. Both novels have an autobiographical air – Connell was born in Kansas City in 1924 – and nowhere more so than in this characterization.

As a sequel coming ten years after its predecessor, *Mr Bridge* has inevitably been overshadowed by the reputation of *Mrs Bridge*, the work for which Connell is still best known. Admittedly, read after *Mrs Bridge*, it does prove an anticlimax: such is the novels' basic similarity, despite having few episodes in common, that *Mr Bridge* can seem largely given over to expanding familiar portraits. Yet *Mr Bridge* remains the better novel, purely on the strength of its more absorbing central figure.

Whatever their respective merits, the novels bear witness equally to Connell's admirably accurate grasp of a social phenomenon that has by no means ceased to exist even today. Perhaps his finest achievement is that he generally avoids the imitative fallacy, conveying the banality and tedium of Leisure Class life without reproducing those symptoms in his evocative yet unfussy prose. It might have been more realistic, though, to distribute the task of embodying the proprieties among a greater number of characters. With their zealous servitude to decorum, the Bridges are, one suspects, less typical of the country club set than even Grace Barron and Alex Sauer.

Redemptive notes

Adam Mars-Jones

JOHN GARDNER
The Art of Living
284p. Secker and Warburg. £8.50.
0 436 17252 6

The title of John Gardner's collection of stories has acquired a retrospective irony with his death in a motorcycle accident last September. The abrupt ending of his literary career makes it harder to assess these final productions, which testify neither to failing powers nor to startling progress. *The Art of Living* is a respectable achievement, and perhaps it is only the book's biographical context that makes such a verdict seem grudging.

The materials of the collection are certainly varied. "The Joy of the Just", for example, is a tall tale rather in the Faulkner mode, the story of Aunt Ella Reikert's exemplary revenge on a preacher who has done her wrong. The characters are well versed in low cunning, and uniformly able to justify their chicaneries by Biblical quotation. "Vlemk the Box-Painter", by contrast, is a sophisticated fairy-story, somewhat over-extended at novella length, about a painter in love with a Princess, who succeeds in painting a portrait of her so lifelike that it can speak. The portrait promptly puts a curse of silence on him.

It is the stories which don't belong to any particular genre which are puzzling; they are carefully written, with plentiful detail and the impression of substance, but there is little that is distinctive about them. They could as easily be the first chapters of novels that never got written.

The first two stories have odd, oblique resolutions. In "Nimram" a famous conductor meets a dying girl, who is terrified of flying, on an aeroplane; she is young enough to be his daughter, he thinks, and then realizes that she might be exactly that. He makes no mention of the possibility, though he doesn't quite dismiss it, and they part at the airport. The next night, the girl attends the concert at which he conducts Mahler's Fifth, and the music is described from her point of view: "all that wide valley of orchestra playing, calm, serene, a vast sweep of music as smooth and sharp-edged as an enormous scythe – she had never in her life heard a sound so broad, as if all of humanity, living and dead, had come together for one grand onslaught."

"Redemption", too, modulates abruptly towards its end. The bulk of the story is concerned with a twelve-year-old boy who accidentally kills his brother, but its focus shifts on the last page to a description of the boy's saturnine horn teacher putting a new instrument through its paces: "In that large, cork-lined room, it was as if, suddenly, a creature from some other universe had appeared, some realm where feelings became birds and dark sky, and spirit is more solid than stone."

The other-worldliness of music is made explicit when the music teacher plays chords on the horn, and then scales that go effortlessly beyond the limits of its register, both above and below.

Gardner seems to share that music-envy (easy for you, Ludwig) that affects so many literary artists; certainly he allows himself an uncharacteristic degree of lyrical effusion when it comes to describing music.

So the expatriate Welshmen in the story "Come on Back", who have made the town of Remsen, New York a Celtic home-from-home, come together in music-making; "It seemed our bones and blood that sang, all heaven and earth singing harmony lines, and when the music broke off on the final chord, the echo that rang on the walls around us was like a roaring Amen . . . It really did seem to me, once or twice, that I looked down on all the congregation from the beams above our heads."

Music-envy flaws these stories by introducing a sudden transcendental element into an otherwise circumscribed universe. The stories which work best are the ones which stand by their premises, even at the cost of a certain conventionality: "Stillness", in which a dying woman relives her youth, and the title story, in which the chef of a classy small-town restaurant cooks as a tribute to his son (who was killed in Vietnam) "the absolutely most elegant dish in the world", which the son had described in a letter, and which just happens to be a Chinese recipe for "Imperial Dog".

In his description of the preparation and serving of the Imperial Dog John Gardner achieves an effective blend of the macabre and the matter-of-fact; but far too much of this posthumous volume he seems to be working well within his powers, turning out solid, likeable stories which deliver just a little less than they promise.

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The pagan heritage

Robert Browning

N. G. WILSON
Scholars of Byzantium
283pp. Duckworth. £28 (paperback, £12.50).
0 7156 1705 2

It used often to be said that the Byzantines preserved the heritage of Greek literature and thought until the humanists of the Renaissance were ready to take over the torch from their faltering hands. Few today would put the matter in terms quite so teleological, or so patronizing. Yet it is not easy to discover what the Byzantines actually did in the course of a thousand years with the literature of ancient Greece to which they enjoyed privileged, and often exclusive, access. Did they use it as a guide to life, as a symbol of social status or national identity, as a body of educational "set books"? Did they seriously try to prevent texts becoming corrupted or lost? How did they understand and interpret the literature of a world very different from their own? These are large questions. To answer them adequately we need massive factual information and sharp conceptual clarity.

N. G. Wilson explores many aspects of these problems, although he concentrates on Byzantine attitudes to the preservation and comprehension of classical texts. As editor of the scholia on Aristophanes and a leading expert on Greek palaeography and codicology he is able to flesh out general statements about Byzantine scholarly activity with an astonishing range of detailed information, often from unpublished sources. He mentions or quotes from more than 350 medieval Greek manuscripts. For the key period AD 800–875 he surveys all surviving manuscripts of classical texts and demonstrates that the predominant interest of scholars of the time was in the scientific and philosophical parts of the Hellenic heritage, which they hoped to find of practical use.

The book is mainly a study of individuals and what they did. Some of them are of little importance in themselves, but interesting as typical figures, like George Choiroboskos, a teacher in Constantinople in the late eighth century who wrote grammatical works, including an elementary linguistic commentary on the Psalms, which remained in use as a textbook for centuries. Others, like the patriarch Photios, who had read and reflected on more books than any European till the Renaissance, were men who would have been giants in any society. Wilson's section on Photios is admirable, and brings out clearly how much of ancient critical concepts and methods was still available in the ninth century to those who sought them out. That on Michael Psellos, another outstanding figure, is a little disconnected and inconclusive, and makes Psellos appear more of a windbag than he was. As there is no definitive list of his works, and as some of them are still unpublished, a degree of fuzziness is inevitable. Yet the adventurous self-confidence with which eleventh-century figures like Psellos handled the heritage of the pagan past does not emerge as clearly as it might. The treatment of Eustathios is sympathetic, if rather one-sided. Wilson argues at some length that Eusthathios was not a brilliant textual critic, but says nothing of his readiness to use the world of his contemporaries to illustrate ancient literature, as shown by his interest in folklore and spoken Greek. Like other twelfth-century writers, Eustathios sometimes displays remarkable independence and originality within the constraints of a traditional framework.

In asking whether Eustathios was a good textual critic Wilson seems to be looking in the twelfth century for the prefiguration of the nineteenth-century English or German classical scholar, for whom the critical study of ancient texts is an end in itself, and also a means of earning a living. But the modern "scholar" is the product of a world of printed books and established universities, neither of which existed in Byzantine society. No Byzantine was or could be primarily a textual critic. Those of them who concerned themselves with classical Greek literature were teachers, civil servants, or clergymen, participating in and contributing to a literary culture which defined the identity of their society and legitimized its social and political structure – including their own place in it. The culture which they perpetuated had two roots of equal importance – Hellas and Christianity. Constantinople was the New Jerusalem as well as the New Rome. Homer and the Psalms are again and again quoted side by side to make a point. When the emperor Alexios Comnenus was accused of seizing church plate to pay his army he justified himself – in a speech recorded by his daughter – by referring to the precedents of Pericles and David (Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 6.3). Many Byzantine teachers and writers were as much concerned with Christian as with classical literature; John Xiphilinos, mentioned for his epitome of Dio Cassius, also compiled a volume of saints' lives and a corpus of homilies of Homer and the Psalms are again and again quoted side by side to make a point. When the emperor Alexios Comnenus was accused of seizing church plate to pay his army he justified himself – in a speech recorded by his daughter – by referring to the precedents of Pericles and David (Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 6.3). Many Byzantine teachers and writers were as much concerned with Christian as with classical literature; John Xiphilinos, mentioned for his epitome of Dio Cassius, also compiled a volume of saints' lives and a corpus of homilies of liturgical use. In some ways Byzantine scholars resembled the 'ulema of pre-modern Islamic society more than they did German professors or fellows of Oxford colleges.

Wilson knows this very well and makes it clear in his studies of individuals. But every now and then he yields to a narrow and anachronistic concept of "scholarship". Himerios "has the saving grace of preserving a few fragments of Greek lyric poetry", but Himerios was a teacher and practitioner of rhetoric, not a philologist. The quality of Moschopoulos' scholarship is "difficult to assess"; but as a teacher and pamphleteer he was scarcely concerned with problems of textual criticism. Not that there were not Byzantines who possessed the temperament and interest of the classical scholar. The admirable principles professed by Elias, the sixth-century commentator on Aristotle, are quoted with approval by Wilson; so too is the concern for the text of the Attic dramatists shown by Demetrios Triklinios in the fourteenth century. He might also have mentioned the discussion by an anonymous schoolmaster in the tenth century of the problems of editing a patristic text. But such concerns were not central for Byzantine men of learning.

In spite of this occasional skewing of view, N. G. Wilson's book is amazingly rich in information and nearly always sound in judgment. It provides a magisterial overview of a field of interest to the classicist and the Renaissance scholar as well as to the professed Byzantinist, and will take its place alongside Lemerle's *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (1971) and Kazhdan's *La produzione intellettuale a Bisanzio* (1983) as a classic introduction to the intellectual world of the Greek Middle Ages.

For honour and for gain

John D'Arms

PETER GARNSEY, KEITH HOPKINS and C. R. WHITTAKER (Editors)
Trade in the Ancient Economy
230pp. Chatto and Windus. £15.
0 7011 2654 X

Collaborative academic ventures with Moses Finley at centre stage have been proliferating since 1979, when Finley, who has taught at Cambridge since he left the United States in 1954, paid his first visit to the American Academy in Rome; there his appearance was a high point at a year-long international symposium of historians and archaeologists on the seaborne commerce of ancient Rome. Now, from Cambridge, comes *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, the offerings of fourteen scholars from Britain, France, Italy and Holland (the book's jacket mysteriously expands the number of countries to five); these papers had their origin in a series of Cambridge seminars, with (we are informed) Finley himself usually in attendance.

This is highly specialized fare, and readers ought not to expect to find any central thesis systematically unfolded; indeed, individual contributors for the most part ignore the arguments of their fellow seminarians and engage instead in debate with scholars who were not present. And so, when Keith Hopkins asserts in his introduction that "we thrashed out, or more often went in circles round, areas of agreement and disagreement" the "we" needs clarification: does it refer only to the editors or to all fourteen seminarians?

Yet the book is valuable. Important issues – the significance of archaeology for ancient economic history, the volume and profitability of trade, the place of trade in the development of towns, and the social status of traders – are repeatedly discussed, from varying theoretical stances and historical perspectives. The chronological range (from archaic Greece to the late Roman Empire) is as wide as that of Finley himself, much of the writing – lively and often combative – is not unworthy of him, and the bibliography provides a good synopsis of specialized work in the field.

The question of the value of archaeological discoveries for the ancient economy receives much critical attention, as is fitting: not simply because ancient artefacts bulk so large in our evidence for trading patterns, but because Finley himself has protested strongly against scholars who infer the existence of interregional, grand-scale commerce from small quantities of discovered materials. While too many field archaeologists continue to labour unaware of the implications of Finley's critique, the more historically-minded among them, as well as increasing numbers of historians, have accepted the challenge and are seeking to define more sharply the economic meaning of surviving artefacts and of their distribution.

For ancient objects, undeniably, travelled, sometimes in amazing numbers, but not all of them were objects of commercial exchange, bought and sold for gain on an organized market. "Trade" in the book's title is not merely descriptive; it has reductionist implications, which work much better for the five Greek papers than for most of the nine others, where "trade" comes to look more and more like "commerce". The thrust of the first part of the book is well illustrated in the paper by A. M. Snodgrass, who argues convincingly that the large numbers of heavy statues freighted in archaic Greece were not items of trade at all, but religious objects, commissioned by a few rich and powerful patrons. In a similar vein, Paul Cartledge sees archaic distribution of such artefacts as decorated pottery not as "commerce properly so called", but rather as "irregular aristocratic surplus and gift exchange . . . aimed at securing goods to consume. . .".

But in the Roman world, particularly between 200 BC and AD 200, this firmly primitivist view of the ancient economy becomes much more difficult to sustain. Hopkins, in an excellent introductory section, lists the factors which contributed to economic growth: population increased; surpluses (agricultural and non-agricultural) expanded; sophisticated harbour facilities were built or enlarged at ports throughout the Mediterranean; Roman merchant-ships commonly conveyed burdens of 350-400 tonnes; and taxation stimulated a large volume of trade over long distances. The Roman archaeologists represented in this volume brandish formidable weapons to demonstrate large-volume commerce, widely diffused and sophisticated in its organization: 40 million Italian wine-jars unloaded in Gaul during a single century (Tchernia), utilitarian and fine table ware from Arezzo and elsewhere which Pliny described as "ennobling", the cities of its production (Pucci), and an incredible dispersion of North African pottery in Italy and throughout the Mediterranean from the last years of the first century AD (Carandini). This last author might have strengthened an already good case had he exploited recent work by D. Kehoe on the workers designated as *coloni* in Latin inscriptions from the great imperial estates of Africa: they were not peasants, it now appears, but, not unlike later French *colons*, farm-managers and agricultural entrepreneurs in their own right. And the publishers might have served their readers better had they provided illustrations of at least some of the artefacts on which the archaeologists' arguments rest. (The book's single illustration is Tchernia's distribution map of Italian amphorae in France, and as he himself astutely observes, such maps often reflect not so much the state of the actual remains, as the place where archaeologists happen to have been busy.)

Juvenal sardonically observed that, in the early Empire, more men were on sea than on the land, such was their eagerness to be rich. He exaggerated of course: the ancient economy was primarily agricultural. Still, given the volume of commodities moved by sea, the size of Roman ships, the large sums of capital invested in trade, and – not least – the tendency for acquisitive instincts to cut across status boundaries, the question quickly arises: who were these traders and investors, in social terms? Whether explicit (as in the papers by Thompson, Garnsey, Pleket and Whittaker) or implicit (as in most of the others), the problem recurs; and though these and other scholars are in broad agreement that traders themselves were usually men of small means, backed by the capital of richer men, there is fierce dispute as to who these backers were and especially as to whether members of the Roman aristocracy engaged in commercial enterprises. In Hellenistic Egypt, wealthy and respectable Alexandrians are found investing in Nile shipping (Thompson), and in the Roman East, in Pleket's view, rich urban notables normally financed maritime commerce through the use of middlemen. On the other hand, Garnsey denies that western Roman aristocrats financed trade through the use of dependents, preferring to see the investors as almost *any* and everybody else, and Whittaker, writing on the late Empire, suspects that the rich made little use of entrepreneurial middlemen, tidily channelling such ungentlemanly urgings to which they might be susceptible into the disposition of surpluses from their own landed estates.

Convictions like these derive from accepting essentially at face value the repeated assertions by upper-class Roman writers that only landed wealth was regarded as fully respectable, a thesis vigorously advocated by Finley in *The Ancient Economy* (1973). Champions of this point of view are unlikely to be shaken by the discovery of more Roman consular names on lead ingots from Spanish mines, or by Tacitus's revelation that men of high rank were among the profiteers in the rebuilding of Rome after the great fire in Nero's reign, or by the many other signs that Roman senators were notoriously engaged in money-making in a far from agricultural form – since such evidence can always be classed as "exceptional" and thus dismissed. Some other scholars, however, the present reviewer among them, have argued that conventional upper-class sentiments alleging indifference to profits are something of a smoke-screen and hide the degree to which senators, not infrequently, combined landowning with commercial ventures. They also argue that the Roman institutions of *clientela*, patronage and friendship were ideally suited both for supplying the necessary front-men and for enabling the aristocratic code to remain intact.

These arguments need to be confronted directly, with more attention being given to the characteristic patterns of upper-class behaviour, in Rome and in comparable pre-industrial societies. In this connection, Toqueville's observations are not wholly inapplicable, perhaps, to conditions in ancient Rome:

> Under an aristocracy it constantly happens that he who works for honour is not insensible to greed for gain. But these two desires only meet in the depths of his soul. He is very careful to hide the place where they meet from prying eyes. He will gladly hide it from himself too.

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Nationalism offshore

Douglas Johnson

ROBERT RAMSAY
The Corsican Time-bomb
245pp. Manchester University Press. £21.
0 7190 0893 X

The French like to tell stories about Corsicans. Sometimes they are cruel stories, as when a Corsican is interviewed on television, and asked what the main crop of the island is. After some hesitation he replies that it is chestnuts. The interviewer, with professional excitement, inquires how the chestnuts are harvested. After more hesitation the Corsican replies that you wait until the wind blows them off the trees. But, says the interviewer, what if there is no wind? "Bien", replies the Corsican, "C'est une mauvaise année." More picturesque is the Giraudoux character who, when asked why so many customs men came from Corsica, replied that it was so that the frontiers of France should be perfumed with garlic.

It could be said that there is no harm in such stories. Most countries have some sub-regional butt which they use in this way. But the Corsicans are sensitive about being butts and understandably so. It is only a short step from such joviality to treating them as if they were all gangsters, smugglers, drug-pushers and pimps, and one could not visit their island without running the risk of being cheated or robbed. Some highly placed French politicians, such as Michel Poniatowski, have not hesitated to use extravagant language when talking about Corsica, and the resentments which such arrogance creates are among the many factors which have made Corsica a centre of violent protest.

Robert Ramsay, who recounts the history of the island, and traces the evolution of political violence there since the mid-1970s, ends his book with a comparison between Corsica and Northern Ireland (a comparison which many Corsicans would reject indignantly, because they are convinced that their case is unique). He points out that, unlike Ireland, there are no religious divisions in Corsica and no outside country laying claim to its territory. There is in Ireland a double fear, that of the Protestants, who fear that they will lose their identity if Northern Ireland is merged into a United Ireland; that of the Catholics, who fear they will lose their identity and suffer civically if they are constantly governed by a Protestant majority.

In Corsica the situation should be simpler. The autonomist awakening of the 1970s can be seen as part of a general movement in which certain ethnic groups (such as the Bretons) demanded a new status in their dealings with their respective nation-states. But in Corsica a greater complexity has developed. It is true that the autonomists have made the Corsicans more aware of who they are in historical, ethnical and cultural terms, and made them determined to safeguard this distinctive personality. But thereafter has come confusion. There are many who want only to see Corsica treated in a different way from the rest of France, rather than a Corsica becoming separate from the rest of France. It is to these moderates that the Socialist government is at present appealing with its creation of a special statute for the island. But there are others who believe that a more dramatic change must take place and that Corsica must affirm her independence rather than her special identity.

Mr Ramsay gives particular importance to the affair of Aleria, in the summer of 1975, when a repatriate from Algeria (those who returned from Algeria often took on the worst characteristics of alien settlers) was involved in a wine scandal which threatened to ruin many Corsican merchants and wine-producers. As a symbolic protest Edmond Siméoni's nationalists occupied the fraudulent merchant's estate (near Aleria). To their astonishment a large force of Republican Guards and helicopters was unleashed against them; shots were exchanged, and two CRS men were killed. As a result groups of Corsicans began to undertake secret military and terrorist training; and President Giscard's sudden switch of policy, away from the hard line and towards conciliation, failed to convince.

French opinion oscillates in its view of Corsican nationalism. The news of bombs exploding, or failing to explode, is greeted with a certain amount of indifference on the mainland. The news that terrorists are organizing a protectionist racket, or that some distinguished figure has been killed because he refused to pay protection money, is greeted with indignation. Indignation is usually followed by a shake-up in the Corsican police; new specialists are appointed, and certain nationalist organizations banned.

Ramsay provides a useful introduction to this sad story. Perhaps he doesn't adequately explain how the clan system still works in Corsica and how it affects the organization of terrorist activity, but he shows how life there is now dominated by the nationalist question and the tortuous ways in which it is evolving. When there are as many as sixty bombing incidents in two nights, the French police congratulate themselves and say that things are getting better. When the newly constituted assembly for Corsica, which contains no working majority for any party, succeeds in voting the regional budget, thanks to an unexpected and temporary agreement among the traditional parties, the *non-alignés* and two of the nationalist parties, then Siméoni says that the future of Corsica cannot be decided by the spin of a coin. But the impression is sometimes given that that is precisely how decisions *are* taken.

Since the recent journey to Corsica by President Mitterrand there are signs that nationalist violence is hotting up. A new, and somewhat mysterious, Armée de libération nationale has appeared; bombs have exploded in the town hall at Ajaccio; warfare between different nationalist groups has come to look like any old gang warfare; tourists have been threatened. It is difficult to believe that when Mitterrand said that he was glad to be in Corsica because he was glad to be in France, this was in any way the statement of an adequate policy.

The wherewithal to fight

Michael Carver

KEITH HARTLEY
NATO Arms Co-operation: A Study in Economics and Politics
228pp. Allen and Unwin. £18.50.
0 04 341022 7

In the process of analysing the whole field of arms procurement within Nato, Keith Hartley breaks icons, slaughters sacred cows and never wavers far from his own personal preference, for the application of laissez-faire of the most rigorous Adam Smith kind to the trade in arms. His book, the product of a Nato Research Fellowship, could more appropriately be subtitled "A Study of Economics versus Politics". He makes no bones about giving economics priority, and in doing so he tends to ignore the military factor, at times almost dismissing it as just another form of bureaucratic, self-seeking pressure.

One of the virtues of Dr Hartley's book is that it debunks many of the facile platitudes which echo round the marble halls of Nato when questions of arms procurement are discussed. He points out that many of the requirements, which ministers and officials constantly reiterate, conflict with each other. "Eradicating wasteful duplication", whether it is in research and development, in production or in other stages of the procurement process, conflicts with competition, between nations and between firms, which the Americans, backed by Hartley, believe to be a key factor both in reducing costs and in achieving high performance. The complexity of all the interacting factors, military, economic and political, is well brought out – indeed to a degree that could make the general reader abandon the quest for a solution in despair. Hartley subjects all the reasons given by Nato governments for insisting on a degree of national participation in arms procurement in some form or another to a searching examination, taking a delight in exploding one well-established myth after another. At the same time he recognizes that national political considerations have to be taken into account.

Because the aerospace field is the one which poses the greatest problems, and accounts for a high proportion of expenditure, he devotes a large part of his study to a detailed examination of joint aerospace projects – too large a part. The result is to obscure one of the conclusions to be drawn from the study: that the degree to which international collaboration is desirable is related to the unit cost, itself linked to the research and development element in it, of the weapon or weapon platform under consideration. The lower the cost is, the less the advantage in collaboration and the greater the advantage either of open competition or of national self-sufficiency.

Hartley accepts that, in the high-cost area, collaboration can provide a more economic answer than self-sufficiency, although it remains more expensive than direct purchase from the most efficient producer, most likely to be the US; but he does not conceal his dislike of arrangements similar both to that which has produced the Anglo-German-Italian Tornado aircraft and that which covers European production of the US F16 fighter. His short concluding chapter gives guidelines, first for his ideal solution – a totally open market – and then for an interim policy: accepting national demands for participation both in R & D and in production. For the latter he advocates designation of one firm as the prime contractor for development, equity in work-sharing being achieved by allocating production to other participants in the project, with each specializing in a specific task. As far as the high-cost aerospace projects are concerned, he suggests a prototype competition between a US and a European design, the winner to complete development and allocate manufacture to American and/or European producers. He implies, although he does not specifically say so, that the plethora of Nato committees and staffs dealing with procurement and standardization could vanish into thin air with no loss to anyone.

His proposals should be welcomed by the military, who have too often been forced to accept a national product in preference to one which they believed to be both technically superior and available earlier; but they will have reservations. Hartley's relentless quest for the best buy could only too easily lead to greater national differences in equipment, particularly as it is very difficult to synchronize the time at which separate nations choose to replace their current inventories. It could also lead to even greater pressure than that which exists already to accept equipment which is primarily designed for world-wide sale, but is not technically adequate to compete with that with which the Soviet armed forces are likely to be equipped in the same time-scale.

World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1983 (681pp. Taylor and Francis. £26. 0 85066 247 8), the fourteenth annual review to be produced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, aims "to provide an overview of what is happening to military expenditure, to the arms trade, and to weapons development, production and deployment" and to report on current disarmament negotiations. The work includes an analysis of the 1982 Falklands conflict by Jozef Goldblat and Victor Millan.

Capri-ccio

Peter Nichols

LUIGI FORNI
The Dove and the Bear
Translated by Tina Mattei.
159pp. Tunbridge Wells: Midas. £6.95.
0 85936 226 4

We should spare a thought for the girls who work for the KGB: they have even more to contend with, it seems, than imperialist agents. Poor Natasha Ranskolnieva, for example, who dedicated her brains and a range of physical assets ("Swelling and provocative breasts distracted masculine admiration from her muscular thighs") to her work with the Rome bureau. When she suddenly found that she had to contend with the then head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, whom she had admired at a distance but never expected to accompany on a trip around Rome at night, she must have known that there would be trouble. "You are", he told her, over a late brandy, "one of the most valuable assets of the Rome bureau", and we can only guess what happened next when a chapter in *The Dove and the Bear* ends with Natasha returning to the embassy with the Chief, "preparing herself for a long night". Eventually she had the good taste to defect.

Ursula Riesman meanwhile, the Capri resident of the KGB, whose services dated back to the times of Stalin and Beria, had two main lines of operation. She would stroll in the island's Piazzetta of an evening, meeting industrialists, politicians, scientists, trade unionists and writers from many countries, and would "eavesdrop on their conversations while sitting, elbow to elbow, at the little tables". She frequented the villas of the international aristocrats, "where one ran across such people as von Bohlen and Halvach of the Krupp dynasty, Agnelli of Fiat, Aristotle Onassis and other private ship-owners . . ." But then came the age of the package-tour, *and the island was* no longer a good place for the collector of information. Poor Ursula had her activities curtailed and Rome headquarters sent a courier down to her "only when absolutely necessary".

Fresh from Andropov's embraces, Natasha made contact with Ursula in Capri in order to carry out their part of an ambitious KGB plan: to bring about a meeting between the Pope and Leonid Brezhnev. She was accompanied by Serghei, another agent who also liked to spend long nights with Natasha. Ursula was disgruntled and hurt that no one told her what the sensual pair were planning under her roof. When it was all over, she complained about their behaviour to a Bulgarian professor who gave her a drink of poisoned port. Thus the professor may have been the link between the ill-treated Ursula and the Bulgarian secret service, which paid Mehemet Ali Agca, a young Turkish terrorist, to shoot the Pope.

The Dove and the Bear purports to reveal a secret meeting between Pope John Paul II and Brezhnev aboard the Soviet cruiser Kirov, at which the Russian aim was to ask the Pope's help in order to calm the Poles, especially Lech Walesa and the other leaders of "Solidarity". The meeting apparently was a success. After a moment of prayer at an improvised altar which Brezhnev had thoughtfully prepared in an adjoining cabin, with oars from a lifeboat to represent a crucifix, the Pope promised to restrain Walesa.

Luigi Forni gallantly accepts the doubts that will arise in the reader's mind concerning the plausibility of his account of this meeting between the two Slav leaders. When he first heard of it, he writes that his reaction was a "mixture of scepticism and hilarity". But he hardly helps us to share his later conviction that the meeting took place. He explains that he cannot reveal the sources which provided him with the story, stating that he has altered the narrative to protect the identity of his informants while reconstructing conversations which took place "with no witness". Of course, Natasha could help us if only we knew where she was. It would be useless to ask the author where she is; "for if he does not know, and if he did, he would never tell you". Ursula has moved on to wherever KGB residents go after being poisoned in Capri. That leaves us with the shred provided by Forni's version of the "*Bulgarian Connexion*". *The Bulgarians differed from the Russians in that they wanted* the total destruction of "Solidarity" because of the bad example it set to Bulgarians. So they tried to have the Pope killed. Yet, the attempt may not even have been the work of the Bulgarians; Forni adds: "the reader must draw his own conclusions according to the evidence which is only now beginning to emerge."

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Silent dogs

Kenneth O. Morgan

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215pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95.
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J. P. W. MALLALIEU
On Larkhill
211pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95.
0 85031 516 6

Labour autobiographies are not what they used to be. Earlier in the century, they would tend to follow a common pattern, perhaps bearing some title such as *Adventures of a Labour Leader*, rather as superannuated generals would call their memoirs *Annals of an Active Life*. If the Labour leader was working-class (Smillie, Hodges, Kirkwood, Shinwell, etc), his life story would trace his career through years of industrial toil, climactic confrontations with brutal employers, the breakthrough into power either in the union or into parliament, and usually a prolonged mellowing process thereafter. If the Labour leader was middle-class (the Webbs, Sam Hobson, Brockway, etc), a conventional childhood and adolescence would be transformed by some dramatic and conclusive engagement with socialism, either through personal experience or through philosophical conversion, or some combination of the two. In each case, there would be a clear thread of explanation to account for the author's socialist ideology or practical involvement in the political or industrial wings of the labour movement. The autobiographies would exist, less as forms of literary self-indulgence than as a key to amplifying and justifying a belief in social change and a career of constructive protest.

Nowadays, however, Labour autobiographies follow a very different, and more varied, style, as is illustrated by these two new books. One, *A Yorkshire Boyhood* by Roy Hattersley, is the record of the first eighteen years of a prominent Labour politician of the present day, currently campaigning hard for the leadership of the Party. The other, *On Larkhill*, a posthumously published fragment of autobiography by J. P. W. Mallalieu, interrupted by his death in 1980 at the age of seventy-two, covers his early life, school and university years in much detail, and some of his journalistic and political activities in the 1930s. It ends with an account of his naval experiences in the Second World War, on which he based a remarkable novel, *Very Ordinary Seaman*. Both in their way are highly attractive, readable books which will give much pleasure – Mr Hattersley's especially so, with its admirable quality of production by Chatto and Windus. Yet a striking feature of both is the dog that does not bark. Neither really explains what impelled the author into Labour politics and a commitment to some form of democratic socialism. Admittedly, Hattersley may well turn his active pen to this fascinating theme in a future work. His book, ending somewhat ambiguously with his departure from home and family in Sheffield either for university or for national service (it is not made clear which) seems to cry out for an early sequel. For all that, readers still pulverized by the general election returns, seeking fresh guidance on the roots and relevance of the British Labour movement, will, for the moment at least, have to look elsewhere.

Hattersley's book is a very pleasant, civilized account of his early years in Sheffield, full of rich detail on the personalities and mores of that great city, which make it vividly instructive for the non-Yorkshire reader. He is less secure on other parts of England; his authoritative discussion of Sheffield Wednesday FC in the 1940s must be weighed against a sadly erroneous passage on the history of the Arsenal team in that same period. The Hattersley household was a secure, happy one, with young Roy, an only child doted on by his father (a lapsed Catholic priest), two resident bachelor uncles, and a formidably bossy mother. In a series of deft sketches, south Yorkshire in the years before, during and just after the war certainly comes to life. Among other things, the historically-inclined reader will note that for schoolchildren like young Roy (and the present reviewer) the years of so-called "austerity" under the 1945–51 Labour government were by no means a time of unrelieved gloom, with generally rising living standards and much cheap popular entertainment as features of the Dalton-Cripps era. The ethos and aspirations of the Hattersley household emerge as strictly bourgeois. They own their semi-detached house; Roy spends five years at a fee-paying prep school; he wins a scholarship to the City Grammar School and extols the pride of possession of a traditional school uniform; he collects stamps and learns Latin. He is urged by his mother "to do well", like the young Lloyd George being told by his formidable uncle to "get on". He captains the school cricket team and finally gains admission to Hull University. In all this, it comes as quite a surprise to learn, in passing, that the Hattersleys were committed to "Labour" (never "socialist") politics, that young Roy attended a Socialist Sunday School and joined the Labour League of Youth. We are given little further explanatory detail apart from a brief account of the 1950 election and praise of one Sid Osgothorpe, a self-improving Sheffield steel worker who represents for Hattersley the abiding values of the English Labour movement. Beyond this, the message of the Labour Party, or the purpose or attraction of socialism for an impressionable, intelligent young schoolboy are not elaborated. He explains his enthusiasm for party canvass returns in much the same terms as for Yorkshire cricket score-cards. No conviction politics here; perhaps they will come in volume two.

The late "Curly" Mallalieu came from more identifiably political stock. His father, an Oldham cotton-spinning employer, was actually a Liberal MP for Colne Valley for six years, where he was defeated by Philip Snowden in 1922. But much of this posthumous book is taken up with the middle-class idylls of childhood and early manhood. His lavishes deserved praise on Oxford's Dragon School, as a unique preserve of juvenile brashness and individuality (as it still is). He depicts Cheltenham College in the early 1920s gracefully in the nets on a fine summer's evening. He revels in the privileged glories of Oxford University, where he gained a distinguished rugby blue and was elected president of the Union. His account of punting on the Cherwell or placing chamber-pots on the "Martyrs' Memorial" is so conventional that it might have been invented by the leader writer of the *Morning Star*. There follow a graphic description of an academic stay at Chicago in 1930–32, with keen appreciation of the social devastation wrought there by the slump, and an excellent eye-witness account of Roosevelt's nomination at the 1932 Democratic convention. Finally, Mallalieu turns to paid employment, as a journalist first with the *Financial News*, then the *Evening Standard* and finally *Tribune*.

Evidently his sympathies were moving fast to the left, as his *Tribune* connection, his friendship with other young socialists like Michael Foot (a lifelong friend who contributes an affectionate foreword), and his nomination as Labour candidate for Huddersfield all show. But no explanation of the nature of his socialism or his political priorities generally is attempted in these early pages. Of course, it might well have been in the unwritten later chapters, which would have covered his thirty-four years as MP for Huddersfield (1945–79), his attachment to the Bevanites, his further journalistic adventures, and his time as a navy minister under Harold Wilson. For this, as for many other reasons, Mallalieu's sudden death was a sad loss indeed.

The overall effect, then, is of two good-humoured, tolerant, profoundly unideological, almost laconic books, and of two talented and ruddy sympathetic men of the left looking back without the least trace of anger. What, if anything, this tells us of Labour in the 1980s or earlier is anyone's guess.



One of twelve woodcut illustrations by Frans Masereel from Das Werkbuch einer Handpresse in den ersten sechs Jahren ihres Wirkens, *1929, offered for sale at Sotheby's on July 27.*

Rag-tag republicans

Bernard Knox

BILL ALEXANDER
British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain 1936–1939
288pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £15.
0 85315 563 1

Between August 1936 and September 1938, well over 2,000 British volunteers went to Spain to fight in the army of the Republic; the Roll of Honour which concludes Bill Alexander's account of the British Battalion contains 526 names of men who did not come back, or did so only to die of their wounds. Alexander himself, an industrial chemist in civilian life, fought with the Anti-tank Battery and later commanded the Battalion in the winter fighting at Teruel, where he was wounded; in the Second World War he was a captain in the Reconnaissance Corps and served in Italy, France and Germany. This rich military experience enables him to describe with precision and clarity the confused and desperate battles in which the British volunteers were engaged, from Madrid in 1936 to the Ebro in 1938; these accounts are made easy to follow by simple but useful maps. Alexander has used the records collected in the archives of the International Brigade Association (of which he is Vice-Chairman) and has interviewed "very many of the volunteers alive today". His book replaces Rust's *Britons in Spain* (1939) and is likely to remain the definitive account of the British Battalion's history.

It is also, in a sense, an official history; Alexander was Assistant Secretary of the British Communist Party after the Second World War and he makes no bones about the fact that the Party was in charge of recruitment for the Battalion and exercised control over its command. This does not mean that its members were all Communists; on the one occasion when a tally was taken, in January 1937, just under one third were members of the CP or the YCL. But "political commissars at the Battalion level, and usually at company level, were Communist Party members with a record of activity in Britain". Military command in action, however, was another matter; it was contingent on "one qualification alone: tested and proven battle ability". Of the eleven who commanded the Battalion in actual battle only one (Tom Wintringham) had held responsible positions in the Communist Party. The rank and file, contrary to the "vague notion", still current, "that everyone in the Brigades was a poet or writer", was overwhelmingly working-class; "a large majority came from areas of heavy industry." And the label "British" covered a wide variety of national affiliations; though the bulk of the recruits came from England, Scotland and Wales, the ranks were swelled, at one time or another, by English-speakers from Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa.

For an official history of this type, the book is refreshingly free of instant ideology and party propaganda: this is an honest and realistic report. No attempt is made, for example, to disguise the fact that after the heavy losses at Brunete in July 1937 – "forty-two men... staggered in the early hours of the morning through the dusty ruins of Villanueva de la Cañada, where 300 had gone into battle nineteen days before" – there were men who "left the front" without authorization. Some "sixty-odd" were concentrated at a camp in the rear and later, their morale restored, they rejoined the battalion: others, 298 in number, made their way back to Britain. Alexander also records "differences and difficulties in the leading group", which culminated, after Brunete, in a stormy session of accusation and counter-accusation back in London. Pollitt, the Communist leader, finally ordered three of the disputants to stay in England while the other two returned to Spain. It is not to be wondered at that problems of this kind emerged in what Louis MacNeice dubbed "a rag-tag army", one in which the conditions of enlistment were ill-defined and discipline depended not on the threat of punishment but on common convictions, an army ill-clad, ill-clothed, ill-equipped and facing increasingly superior force. What is remarkable is that after every costly engagement – Jarama (which reduced effectives from 500 to 160), Brunete in the July heat, Teruel in –20°C, Franco's breakthrough to the Ebro and the Republican counter-offensive – the Battalion returned to the front, fewer in number each time, to fight with that stubborn courage in adversity for which the British soldier is famous.

"Was it all worth while?" asks the concluding chapter. A negative answer has recently become fashionable: the idea that a Republican victory would have made it easier for Hitler in 1940 to push through to Gibraltar and so close the Mediterranean to Britain. But this scenario blandly assumes that a Republican victory would have made no difference to Hitler's progress towards mastery of Europe. A Franco defeat might, however, have given Hitler and especially Mussolini second thoughts about their military capability: it might have inspired the Czechs, the French and above all the British governments to stand up to Hitler before it was too late: it might have radically changed the course of history. Such, at any rate, was the conviction of those who risked, and some who gave, their lives for the Republican cause in Spain.

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WALTER J. ONG
Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word
201pp. Methuen. £7.95 (paperback, £3.50).
0 416 71370 X

Here are four common objections to the computer. It is inhuman, pretending to establish outside the mind what can only be in the mind. It destroys memory, and so weakens mental powers. It is unresponsive. And it cannot defend itself (there's no give and take with a computer). Each of these objections has been applied to writing, by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, a point Walter J Ong makes by way of arguing that writing is as much a technology as print and the computer. And because it is a technology, it has transformed consciousness, since technologies "are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations . . . and never more than when they affect the word."

The ghost of Marshall McLuhan, Father Ong's erstwhile friend, colleague, and co-religionist, haunts these pages. But there are important differences between the two sages. McLuhan's thoughts – the famous "probes" – were deliberately gnomic and provocative; Ong is copious and uncool, spelling everything out. McLuhan is known for focusing on the shifts from written to print and print to electronic cultures; Ong concentrates on the earlier transformation from "orality" to literacy – the subject, at least in part, of eight of his previous books and countless articles. *Orality and Literacy* is merely an introductory survey or summary of earlier work, Ong's own and that of others working in allied fields.

At the heart of the book lies an account of the central features of primary oral cultures – that is, cultures with no knowledge of writing at all – and of the shift from oral to written culture. There are also chapters and sub-sections – often awkwardly integrated, as in the digressions in oral narrative – on the "discovery" of primary oral cultures (the work of Milman Parry and his followers), the origins of writing, residual oral features in post-oral cultures (including an especially interesting discussion of rhetoric and learned Latin), the shift from writing to print, the relation of print to literary theory, and the shift from print to our increasingly electronic culture, which Ong calls "the age of secondary orality". In other words, the central shift from orality to literacy fits into a larger theory of history based on "the technologizing of the word" – from oral to written to print to electronic cultures.

In primary oral cultures the spoken word is associated with action and power; words are more than mere signs or symbols, since they are "necessarily spoken, sounded and hence power-driven". Words are always events (as in the Hebrew term *dabar*, which means both "word" and "event"); they are acts of communication requiring a listener, even in the expression of sustained or lengthy thought. As a consequence, thought in oral culture must be shaped into mnemonic patterns: "serious thought is intertwined with memory systems." Mnemonic needs account in part for what Ong calls the "additive" rather than "subordinative" nature of oral thought, its syntactical simplicity in comparison with the fixed and elaborate grammars of written discourse. Hence too the aggregative rather than analytic nature of oral thought, a feature Ong assimilates to Lévi-Strauss on the "totalizing" habits of the "savage mind". The oral style is copious and unafraid of redundancy, so friend of the "sparse linearity" admired (in part, ironically, for its "naturalness") in modern stylists.

The importance of memory in oral culture may also account for its highly traditionalist or conservative character. In written or print cultures the role of the wise elder, repository of his or her people's wisdom, is weakened, since knowledge can now be stored outside the mind; nor is the constant reiteration of conventional wisdom any longer a necessity. Knowledge need not be uttered to survive. In oral cultures knowledge is something external, enacted, and unifying. In written cultures it is internal and isolating. This is a point Ong relates to the character of sound, treated more fully in an earlier work, *The Presence of the Word* (1967). Sound "pours into the hearer", whereas sight depends on and establishes distance, keeps viewer and viewed apart.

The character or content of the knowledge transmitted is inevitably affected; the medium shapes the message. Men and their actions are depicted in monumental and public terms in oral art in part because of the "mnemonic serviceability" of those terms. Even, or especially, the driest or most neutral-seeming bits of information – lists and inventories, for example – have to be animated, associated with what Ong calls "the human lifeworld"; and often, because knowledge of them depends on a human agent, they are linked to a characteristic note of struggle in oral expression. This "agonistic" dimension of pre-literate culture is related by Ong (the precise nature of the relation is unspecified) to common features of oral narrative: relish for physical violence, for example, bragging, ritual name-calling or "flyting". It also contributes to what he sees as the personalized or instrumental character of knowledge in pre-literate societies, a point illustrated with examples drawn from A. R. Luria's *Cognitive Development* (1976). In the primary oral cultures examined by Luria, little or no interest is expressed in definitions. This is because in such cultures "words acquire their meanings only from their always insistent actual present". That the meanings of words "come continuously out of the present", Ong links with another assertion about the absence or rarity of a sense of abstract, computed time in pre-literate societies. Before writing, we are reminded, "most persons did not know and never even tried to discover in what calendar year they had been born".

When Ong turns to the way writing re-structures consciousness much of what he says (that writing makes the past present and companionable, that it separates the knower from the known) we've already heard. Though his book is short and dense, it is also repetitive. In the concluding chapters, though, he introduces new material, discussing the changes effected by literacy exclusively in terms of narrative, a project that leads on to the final chapter's account of current literary theory. That this discussion comes after a lengthy chapter on the shift from written to print cultures (with a concluding section on the subsequent shift to electronics) is distracting. So too is the way Ong spends from one theoretical school to another, concluding his book with an eight-page survey of "the even broader fields of philosophy, social sciences, biblical studies, and . . . the study of consciousness itself". What he says about narrative, though, is sensible and interesting, if unprovable (like so much else in the book). It consists of speculations about the shift from an episodic to a sequential and causal narrative; from a personalized to a gradually more impersonal or "decontextualized" narrator – and audience as well; and from what Ong calls "heavy" (that is "flat") character types to the rounded ideal of modern (if not post-modern) fictional characters. Each of these shifts Ong plausibly relates to the shift from orality to literacy – though he also admits a host of other plausible sources.

In the final chapter Ong proposes certain connections between present-day theorists and philosophers and the technology of the word. The New Critics, for example, "have assimilated the verbal art work to the visual object-world of texts rather than to the oral-aural event-world". The structuralists and post-structuralists are ticked off for paying "little if any attention to the specific psychodynamics of oral expression", though the post-structuralists (Ong calls them "textualists") are also praised for undercutting any simple one-to-one correspondence between "items in an extramental world and spoken words" and "spoken words and written words". This is "a great service" and puts the post-structuralists "in the same territory" as McLuhan. On the other hand, the post-structuralists know little of "recent work on the orality-literacy contrasts treated in the present book"; work which complicates their accounts of the origins of simplified one-to-one correspondences. For example, though Plato expresses reservations about writing in the Seventh Letter and the *Phaedrus* (key texts for Derrida, who sees the privileging of speech over writing as a way of bolstering such correspondences) his grounds for excluding poets from *The Republic*, as Eric Havelock has argued, suggest a bias *towards* writing. In Ong's words, Plato proscribed the poets "because they stood for the old oral, mnemonic world of imitation, aggregative, redundant, copious, traditionalist, warmly human, participatory". In general, the post-structuralist followers of Derrida need to pay more attention to history – by which Ong means the shifts from oral to written to print cultures; then they would realize, for example, the importance of print (not just sound) in fostering the illusion that words are "presences", something more than purely relational units.

In earlier works, Ong ascribes a religious dimension to his history of the word: Christ was born, he writes in *The Presence of the Word*, "at the precise time when psychological structures assured that his entrance would have the greatest opportunity to endure and flower": that is, in a predominantly oral culture, one in which the alphabet existed, but in which print had not yet obscured the real (oral) nature of the Word. "This makes God sound like J. Walter Thompson", writes Frank Kermode. In *Orality and Literacy* there are no such spiritual speculations; nor is anything said of the history's possible psychoanalytic dimension (Father Ong is a Professor of Psychiatry as well as Humanities), in which tentative analogies are drawn between Freud's psychosexual stages and the shifts from oral to written to print to electronic cultures. In an earlier work, these wilder excursions were so carefully hedged with qualification that they all but disappeared – here they are excluded from the start. Though one often objects to local assertions, or to Ong's failure always or adequately to canvas alternative and often more obvious explanations, the broad lines of the book are plausible.

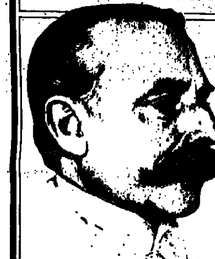
More substantial reservations concern its many awkwardnesses and infelicities of style. To begin with, there is the matter of jargon: the term *verbomoteur*, Ong tells us, will be used for "all cultures that retain enough oral residue to remain significantly word-attentive in a person-interactive context (the oral type of context) rather than object-attentive". His style can also be heavy-handed: "In an *Essay on Criticism* (1711) Alexander Pope expected the poet's 'wit' to guarantee that when he treated 'what oft was thought' he did it in such a way that readers found it 'ne'er so well expressed'. The way of putting the accepted truth had to be original." Finally, there is frequent syntactical muddle: "Havelock (1978a) has shown how a concept such as Platonic justice develops under the influence of writing out of archaic evaluative accounts of human operations (oral 'situational thinking') innocent of the concept of 'justice' as such."

Objecting to this last example is no matter of a mere or naïve chirographic bias: the awkwardness obscures Ong's meaning. Nor is this a principled or ideological obscurity. Father Ong's blow against *la clarté*, or what another author in Methuen's "New Accents" series terms "the tyranny of lucidity". Rather it is a matter of indifference or inattention, as though the author's sole concern was with information or knowledge. This is an odd impression to convey, given the purport of that information and its insistence upon the shaping power of the medium of expression. To say that this book's matter is sufficiently intriguing to overcome its manner, is to pay it a rather subversive compliment.

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Mighty curious

Michael Hunter

ARTHUR MACGREGOR (Editor)

Tradescant's Rarities: Essays on the foundation of the Ashmolean Museum 1683, with a catalogue of the surviving early collections

382pp, with 186 half-tones and 75 line drawings. Oxford University Press. £70.
0 19 813405 3

Among the more remarkable possessions of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford is a series of nearly a dozen paintings of different members of the Tradescant family. Considering their moderate status, the Tradescants must be almost the best-recorded family in seventeenth-century England: these canvases, executed between about 1638 and 1645, show various delineations of John Tradescant the elder, of his son John the younger and his second wife Hester, and of the younger John's two children by his first marriage. Perhaps the most notable of the series evoke the Tradescants' chief claim to retrospective fame, as gardeners and collectors: in one, Tradescant the younger is shown dressed as a gardener with his hand on a spade, while in another he shares the foreground with a striking still-life in the form of a heap of exotic shells.

The Tradescants were first and foremost expert gardeners who catered for the aristocratic taste in horticulture in early Stuart England. Their patrons included the Cecils at Hatfield, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and Charles I. Through their exalted contacts, the Tradescants were able to make various trips to Europe, to Russia and even to America, from which they introduced a number of new species into this country.

Their taste in collecting seems to have developed as a pendant to their gardening. Apart from the opportunities for accumulating objects provided by such trips abroad, the Tradescants' contacts with the aristocracy also proved beneficial, and particularly during the lifetime of the elder Tradescant, in the reigns of James I and Charles I, they built up a large accumulaiton of rarities which gained an unprecedented reputation in England.

By this time, cabinets of curiosities were commonplace in countries like Italy, and travellers abroad like John Evelyn occupied much of their time in visiting them. But in England, though there had been occasional collections of rarities since the Elizabethan period – perhaps notably that of Sir Walter Cope – the Tradescants' was the first to become really celebrated. Indeed it was claimed to be the best in Europe, and the extent of its fame is revealed by the number of references to it in writings of the time. "I am almost perswaded a Man might in one daye behold and collecte into one place more Curiosities than hee could see if hee spent all his life in Travell", exclaimed Peter Mundy after a visit to the cabinet in 1634, and the way in which it became virtually synonymous with collecting is illustrated by the fact that the Scottish botanist, Sir Andrew Balfour, referred to his rarities as "my Tradescants". It was also regularly available to the public before and after the Civil War, and in 1656 became the subject of the first published catalogue of an English collection of rarities, a dumpy volume entitled *Musaeum Tradescantium: Or, A Collection of Rarities Preserved at South-Lambeth neer London by John Tradescant.*

This catalogue was partly compiled by Elias Ashmole, himself a connoisseur and collector, who had become friendly with the Tradescants. Ashmole was ultimately to become the possessor of the Tradescant collection, after a complex legal wrangle which has been the subject of much vituperation among modern commentators. It was Ashmole who presented the rarities to the University of Oxford to be housed in the purpose-built museum in Broad Street which still survives (though its function has since changed) and which was opened exactly three hundred years ago, in 1683.

Tradescant's Rarities celebrates this tercentenary, combining a catalogue of such objects from the original collection as still survive with a series of essays on the Tradescants, on the foundation and early years of the Museum and on the history of collecting in the period. The introductory essays form an appropriate opening to the volume, though they are a little patchy: April London has contributed an interesting analysis of the benefactors listed in *Musaeum Tradescantium*, while Arthur MacGregor provides an overview of comparable collections of the period which forms a welcome supplement to the fullest account of the subject yet extant, Sir David Murray's classic but now dated history of museums. The essays on the Ashmolean, on the other hand, really add little to what is already available in print, particularly in C. H. Josten's *Elias Ashmole*.

The real kernel of the book, however, is the definitive catalogue of the objects surviving from the early collections, which comprises some three-quarters of the volume, illustrated by over two hundred figures and plates. An impressive array of experts has been assembled to deal with each of the classes of object represented. They provide a painstaking account of the items involved, sometimes running to several pages for a single exhibit, as with the oldest North American Indian skin shirt known, or a runic almanac presented to the Ashmolean in 1683. Perhaps the most interesting entries concern ethnographic specimens, since these comprise a sort of dated deposit of early artifacts from North America and, elsewhere, of considerable historical significance. But equal care has been devoted to catalogueing pictures, coins and more miscellaneous curiosities such as elaborately carved fruitstones, one of the characteristic desiderata of collectors like the Tradescants.

The differential survival of certain classes of objects means that the catalogue gives a somewhat lopsided reflection of the Tradescants' collection as it existed in the seventeenth century. Those producing the catalogue have been dependent on marrying surviving objects with descriptions in *Musaeum Tradescantium* and in catalogues of the collection made in the early years of the Ashmolean, and on the whole this has proved easiest with man-made objects such as ethnographic items and works of art. Natural rarities, on the other hand, even when they have survived (and many have clearly long since succumbed to decay), have proved much more difficult to identify among the larger collections into which they have been absorbed, as the brief relevant sections here make plain. Hence the extensive sections of flora, fauna and mineralogical specimens in the Tradescants' collection are barely represented.

Any reader prepared to take the trouble, however, can draw his own conclusions about the original collection from materials provided in this book, since facsimiles of *Musaeum Tradescantium* and the early catalogues and Benefactors' Book of the Ashmolean are themselves included. These appear on five sheets of microfiche neatly tucked into a pocket inside the back cover, and this is perhaps the ultimate feature of the appropriately lavish production of this celebratory catalogue. All in all, *Tradescant's Rarities* is a worthy memorial to the greatest of early English collectors.

Hook, line and sinker

David Profumo

IZAAK WALTON

The Compleat Angler 1653-1676
Edited with an introduction and commentary by Jonquil Bevan
437pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
0 19 812313 2

Few books in English have enjoyed such a varied publishing history as *The Compleat Angler*, which, since its first appearance in 1653 as a modest volume pocket-sized for bankside consultation, has endured about 400 distinct editions, including numerous rarities such as bindings sporting buttons or medallions, and one, belonging to a devotee named Higgs, embellished with wood from Charles Cotton's celebrated fishing-hut. A scarce first edition subjected, earlier this century, to a pre-auction sniff transpired to be a copy of the 1928 facsimile artificially aged with coffee-stains.

That the book has become a household name is largely the result of the Victorian idealization of Izaak Walton as a quaint and pious old man, a veneration dubbed by one critic "la religion waltonienne". The way in which the archaic spellings of author and title have been preserved is one index of the nostalgia which still inspires the book. With so many previous printings, what does Jonquil Bevan's new edition actually offer? First, it uniquely presents in their completeness the 1653 text followed by the 1676 version – the former Walton's slender original, the latter his more familiar revision – a juxtaposition that will "enable the interested reader to trace its evolution". When this facility is coupled with the editor's decorously succinct life of Walton, the extensive notes keyed to the 1676 version, and a textual apparatus designed to show the variants between the editions Walton himself supervised, it is clear that this *Compleat Angler* was well worth producing.

This is a book for the scholar rather than the mere angler; its main advantage is the evidence it furnishes of the author at work revising his original, a process that seems, as with his *Lives*, to have been meticulous and slow. In Bevan's view, Walton gradually transformed a manual into what was virtually a commonplace book, by a series of expansions that made the fifth edition (1676) at once clearer, more allusive, and fuller in moral sentiment. This protreptic dimension to the book is typified by the homiletic coda that Walton added in Chapter XXI, but he also amplified many points of piscatorial interest, gradually making his first efforts more complete, though evidently never regarding the book as encyclopedic.

Despite the occasional note of apologia, the introduction cogently analyses the literary status of the work. Unlike the earlier Oxford editor, A.B. Gough (1915), Jonquil Bevan, correctly, does not regard the majority of the text to be merely a technical handbook; she appraises its variety and its anthological nature, a repository for ballads, proverbs, encomia, taxonomic discourses and catches of all kinds. She handles well the complex matter of Walton's indebtedness to previous halieutic writers, the extent and method of transmission, and those borrowings "wherewith he stuffs his indigested octavo", according to his earliest detractor, the curmudgeonly Richard Franck (1656).

Whether dapping for chavender or bushing for trout, Walton is fascinated with a mass of natural detail: a glossary might have been an advantage here, since the commentary sometimes presumes in the modern reader a familiarity with archaic vocabulary – "Puet". "Pismire", "Cony-Fish", and "Owlers" pass unexplained. Such details typify Walton's capacity for wonder in the face of natural variety, and contribute to his distinctive voice – one which can offer often radiant descriptions: "There is also a *Bleak* . . . a Fish that is ever in motion, and therefore called by some the *River-Swallow* . . . his back is of a pleasant sad or Sea-water-green, his belly white and shining as the *Mountain-Snow*." Walton died 300 years ago this December, and this edition is a handsome tribute to his singular place in English letters.

The virtuoso abroad

David Nokes

JOHN BOWLE (Editor)

The Diary of John Evelyn

476pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.
0 19 251011 8

A necessary ingredient in the appeal of many historical diaries appears to lie in the element of serendipity surrounding their survival and discovery. We are suspicious of those Cabinet diarists who consciously dramatize the minutiae of their lives for the amusement of later generations, but our belief in the authentic informality of the genre is confirmed when we are assured that the manuscript of a diary has lain neglected for years in some cobwebbed attic. In the case of Evelyn's diary, the loose sheets were being used to cut out dress patterns until rescued from this domestic indignity by a zealous antiquary in the early nineteenth century. At the time the then Lady Evelyn was convinced that the public would find little of interest in her ancestor's jottings. A century later Virginia Woolf was still asking why modern readers should trouble themselves with "the uninspired work of a good man". The answer, she concluded, was ignorance; Evelyn's ignorance and the modern reader's relative erudition. There is certainly a naïve charm about this earliest of all Baedekers, as Evelyn, avoiding civil broils at home, travels through Europe offering observations on the art, architecture and curiosities that catch his eye. He describes the paintings in Florence, the catacombs in Rome, the gondolas in Venice, the galley-slaves at Marseilles and some macabre experiments with a dog in the bay of Naples, all with the amused detachment of a Grand Tourist. But he always finds his real delight in trees and gardens; the "delicious shade" of Antwerp; the "goodly elms" of Tours; the physic garden of Genoa with its "noble palm"; the precious shrubs and rare fruits of the Tuileries which were, he declared, "a paradise".

Yet there is a lack of zest about Evelyn's descriptions which treat every subject with the same impersonal formality. In Paris he observes the torture of a prisoner; in Rome the decorations of the papal palace; but in both cases his language combines sharp visual detail with a total lack of emotional involvement or comment. Evelyn's prose, like his subject-matter, is always well-timbered and stately. This diary, unlike Pepys's, is not strictly a diary at all; much of it takes the form of a memoir of earlier years, and even when dealing with recent events, Evelyn's descriptions have the calmness of recollections in tranquillity. There is none of the day-to-day bustle and excitement of Pepys, for Evelyn almost wholly excludes the personal element from his diary. Even when mentioning the death of a child or of an old friend, his language has a generalized elegiac dignity. He finds more interest in the architecture of a palace than in the character of a prince, and although he describes in detail the dissection of several animals, he offers no anatomy of the mind. Virginia Woolf concluded that his writing was opaque rather than transparent. "we see no depths through it, nor any very secret movements of mind or heart." Instead we have the encyclopedic observations of a gentleman virtuoso, the memoranda of a green-fingered antiquary. This new selected edition of the diary by John Bowle is handsomely presented and offers a useful and representative miscellany of Evelyn's remarks. It should make ideal holiday reading for the vacationing academic or horticulturalist doing Europe on the grand scale.

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Whiffs of bohemianism

Victoria Glendinning

VIOLET POWELL

The Constant Novelist: A Study of Margaret Kennedy 1896-1967

219pp. Heinemann. £10.95.
0 434 59951 4

Margaret Kennedy shot to fame with her second novel *The Constant Nymph* in 1924, when she was twenty-eight. After a slow start the book had the sort of general success that is less common today, when fiction tends to be tailored for particular groups or markets. The romantic tragedy of Lewis Dodd and young Tessa was popular with mandarins and middlebrows, young and old: Moore, Housman, Hardy and Bennett praised it, and it was a cult book, briefly, for the young Cyril Connolly. There was added spice for the *cognoscenti* in the rumour that the rackety artistic household in the story, with its trails of wives, mistresses and illegitimate children, owed much to the life-style of Augustus John. Lewis Dodd was partly modelled on Lady Violet Powell's own brother-in-law, Henry Lamb the painter, though music, not painting, was the channel for the talents of the fictional cast of bohemians and exotically displaced persons.

Margaret Kennedy wrote fifteen other novels and "a number of plays" and film scripts, but apart from the dramatization and filming of the *Nymph* itself she never really repeated her success. Lady Violet's "study" is unaccountably disappointing. Her subject – long-nosed and irrepressibly loquacious, to judge from the photographs – had an upper-middle-class background and was educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College (which she hated, and exploited as copy in her famous novel) before going up to Somerville College, Oxford. The year after *The Constant Nymph* came out she married David Davies, a Wykehamist barrister who had been secretary to Asquith; they had three children, and lived in Campden Hill Square.

Powell's material is thin, and her style of writing idiosyncratic: her commas are distributed with the abstract anarchy of cake-crumbs on a carpet. She fills gaps in eccentric ways – for example, with her own first impression of Margaret Kennedy's beloved Tyrol, or with mild anecdotes of a not strictly relevant kind about peripheral people. Miss Guinness, the headmistress of Cheltenham, retired in 1924 but continued to make herself felt:

> To please her fastidious taste a famous tea and coffee merchant in Bath mixed a special blend of China tea. This was still supplied in the nineteen-fifties to those who enquires for Miss Guinness's Blend. Another of her Cheltenham pupils, the novelist Sylvia Thompson, recommended it to me and I found it peculiarly delicious. Perhaps inevitably after twenty years or so, the name of Guinness has been replaced by that of Powell, but the blend remains consistently excellent.

This is delightful – but whom, one feels compelled to ask, is this book meant to be about?

The only substantial mass of first-hand documentation that the author has come up with is a two-year journal by Margaret Kennedy written just before the Second World War broke out, to cheer up a bereaved friend. Lady Violet chooses to paraphrase rather than quote this journal; and an account of domestic and professional discontents, dull dinner parties and troublesome colds is thereby deprived of whatever personal or period flavour it might have had. Nor, though Lady Violet devotes ten pages to telling the story of *The Constant Nymph*, does she quote anything from it to indicate the tone, pace and quality of the writing. Apart from the assertion that the novel represents the conflict between art and culture, one is given little notion of the novelist's intentions, or of the nature and extent of her achievement.

It may be good breeding and a natural reserve that prompted Lady Violet to be equally obscure in biographical matters; there are anecdotes, culled from the journal, about Margaret Kennedy's disagreements with "a diplomat's wife" on "a committee to award a literary prize" – a "comic situation" may, as she says, have arisen, but it is quite meaningless since one is told neither the precise setting nor the identity of the heroine's antagonist. A similar discretion and vagueness blurs the point of many other situations and stories.

One may deduce however that Margaret Kennedy was temperamental, often bad-tempered and truculent. She was spiteful about friends who are a couple of pages later, listed among her intimates. She sulked at her dinner parties, where the main course was generally "a small circle of ham on pineapple with a tiny sausage in the centre". She, and her biographer, relish very faintly risqué stories and very mildly naughty puns. She expressed her frustrations through ill-health; her colds are the best-documented things in this book, and as war threatened "her hairdresser exclaimed in horror at the state of her scalp" and "her dentist warned her of the deplorable state of her mouth". She had shingles, and Bell's Palsy, which is that terrible thing that happens when the wind changes, fixing the expression in an alarming grimace. She went deaf early. These were true misfortunes; but nothing about Margaret Kennedy as described here suggests a noble heart or an interesting mind battling against such adversity.

There is absolutely no reason why the author of one phenomenally popular book and several respectably successful ones should, this fact apart, be more interesting, let alone nicer, than anyone else. That perhaps is the lesson to be learned from this "study" of Margaret Kennedy. St John Ervine once wrote "in a magazine" (there are no notes and no attempts at professional precision in this book) that "any intelligent charwoman would be better company than Miss Kennedy". If this was even halfway true, the foggy and whimsical nature of this memoir was perhaps inevitable.

Images of ordinariness

Linda Taylor

NICOLA BEAUMAN

A Very Great Profession

273pp. Virago. £8.95.
0 86068 304 4

In *A Very Great Profession* Nicola Beauman aims "to present a portrait through their fiction of English middle-class women during the period between two world wars". It is "their" fiction in the sense that they both wrote it and read it, and the "very great profession" of the title is the one that Katharine Hilberry, in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*, was a member of: "She lived at home." These are the women who led semi-genteel lives, who spent their time drinking afternoon tea and reading novels from the circulating libraries, and who existed in a world that was changing faster than ever before. The suffragette movement, Freud, the motor-car and the wireless should have given them greater freedom but, all too often, these factors merely created an awareness of unfulfilled potential – dreams that conflicted with the pressures of domesticity.

Woman readers, Beauman says, "whose lives are of necessity filled with the minutiae of the material world, have always wanted to know about 'the outside of one's age' " (the phrase is Virginia Woolf's) "and there is no real reason, except that the conventions of criticism had so decreed, why fiction that describes it should lack staying power". This argument is as fallacious as the one which decrees that working-class children should want to read about supermarkets and lorry drivers rather than middle-class conventionality or fairy-tales. Indeed, as Beauman's book meticulously shows, the popular subjects of the so-called women's novels of the 1920s and 1930s were sex and romance – as related by such writers as Elinor Glynn and Ethel M. Dell. It was the inner yearnings of the women who lived at home that held most interest, not the day-to-day tediousness of their lives – they knew quite enough about that as it was.

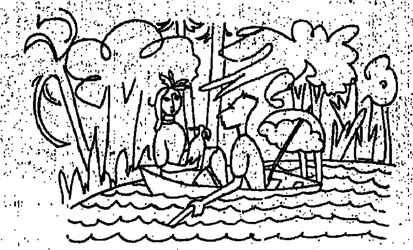
In an attempt to get away from the strictures of "Literature", Beauman holds that "a novel is 'good' . . . because it moves the reader and feeds her imagination". It does not necessarily follow, however, that what feeds the imagination of one generation will feed that of the next; when it comes to posterity, or staying power, it is the way in which the everyday is dealt with, and not the everyday itself, that transcends time. There is nothing more domestic, for example, than the details of a young lady's toilet table. But when Pope describes them in *The Rape of the Lock*, it is not for their social or historical interest that they are memorable. Nicola Beauman would dismiss the toilet table as "scene-setting rather than touching the heart of things"; she would presumably also dismiss Hardy's description of the life of a milkmaid or James's fixation with possessions in the same way. The heart of things for Beauman is "how a woman [in the 1920s or 1930s] organised contraception", or how "Mrs Dalloway [held] up her stockings"; and though it is natural enough to be curious about vinegar sponges and corsets, when it comes to Mrs Dalloway they don't seem the essential things.

Beauman irritably quotes Virginia Woolf's depiction of "the novelist . . . who . . . concocts his books out of the froth of the moment . . . his work passes as the year 1921 passes . . . and in three years' time looks as dowdy and dull as any other fashion which has served its turn and gone its way". She might have gone on to say that though "the froth of the moment" may be dull and dowdy in three years' time, after fifty or sixty years it becomes quaint and charming. And more than anything else it is the quaintness of the details of middle-class women's lives in the period between 1914 and 1939 that appeals to Beauman.

For its range as a piece of social documentation, however, *A Very Great Profession* has value. In her search for the everyday, Beauman deals with the big issues – war, feminism, psychoanalysis, love and so on – and she makes some sense of the changing expectations of her ordinary middle-class (and not so middle-class) women. She deals, in depth or in passing, with the works of more than fifty women writers of the time, from Elizabeth Bowen and Katharine Mansfield to Vera Brittain, Ethel M. Dell and Radclyffe Hall. But it is non-fiction that provides Beauman with her most acute images of ordinariness: such as the prize-winning entries for a competition set in 1920 by the magazine *Our Homes and Gardens*, which wanted readers to send "an account of how they run, or would run, a servantless house for a middle-class family", or the dismal picture of working-class drudgery drawn by Leonora Eyles in her documentary book, *The Woman in the Little House*.

The main weakness of *A Very Great Profession* is Beauman's insistence on treating novels as social documents. Virginia Woolf, she says, "left the everyday out of her novels and confined it instead to her diaries and letters, to astonishing effect . . . it is literature's loss that this detail is excluded from the fiction". Which is like saying that a literary travel book is disappointing because it fails to supply a relevant time-table of trains. The Monicas, the Rosamunds, the Lallies and the Lauras, however prosaic their lives, are creatures of the imagination (the author's and their own); it is in their nature as heroines that their ordinariness will be extraordinary – just as Jane Eyre's and Fanny Price's was.

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processes the more clearly they are seen to order themselves in strict accordance with the laws of physics, and most scientists are content to accept that the whole evolutionary process was a hit-and-miss affair in which higher levels of organization arose by chance, and survived because they possessed advantages in the struggle for survival.

Of course the analytical procedures which reduce a living creature to a mechanism do not in the least represent the complete story, since aggregates of molecules possess properties absent from the constituent molecules – a rubber ball is not composed of bouncy atoms. And it is the task of the physicist to understand the emergence of new properties, including self-reproduction in the case of the most primitive living forms. There seems to be no reason to doubt the validity of this programme so long as the new emergent properties are themselves objectively describable, as is the ability of the DNA double helix to uncoil itself, and for each half to replicate the whole by acquiring the necessary elements from its surroundings. A serious hitch occurs, however, when the emergent property is conscious thought, which is inaccessible to objective investigation. However firmly the scientist may believe that the possession of a mind is a natural outcome of the laws of physics applied to sufficiently complex organization of molecules, he must admit that it is a property of matter totally different in kind from any he has studied before, and that a hitherto unrecognized principle may become effective at this point. No inconsistency is involved in the belief that the conscious mind is not bound to the material constraints expressed by the laws of physics, but may have knowledge, inexpressible in words, of whatever it is that lies beyond space and time. A physicist who rejects the testimony of saints and mystics is no better than a tone-deaf man deriding the power of music.

All the same, the long evolutionary process does not seem to have been directed towards the emergence of consciousness in the way that Bergson and Smuts, for example, argued. Was it really for us that the universe was created, or are we merely a by-product? Or, since the precise human form is surely an accident of evolution, was the universe designed so that sufficient complexity might emerge to allow some vehicle for consciousness? For whatever reason the master plan was adopted, the conclusion from physics is that it can be specified quite economically. As the basic phenomena of gravitation, electromagnetism and the short-range nuclear forces get drawn together into a unified theory (something only partially achieved as yet), the equations from which all material behaviour derives take a form whose details are prescribed by the values of a small number of constants. It is the choice of these which determines what sort of a universe comes into being (this is an oversimplification, but I believe the essence is sound). Detailed calculations, for instance of the processes in the interior of stars, have shown that the values of these constants are surprisingly critical. Change them slightly and stars would not form, or would go through their life-cycle so fast that there would be insufficient time for complex organisms to evolve. No doubt very different universes could support very different living creatures (vast super-fluid networks in a universe composed entirely of helium?), but one is strongly tempted to feel that the numbers were chosen with us in mind. It must not be forgotten, however, that for all we know the totality of things may include every possible sort of universe, each closed in upon itself and inaccessible from all others, and that only those that can support life in some form will contain creatures questioning the origin of their being. And each will be similarly tempted to feel specially chosen.

If this is as far as physics can take us, it leaves us still in the dark about man's place in the scheme. Suppose, however, the various fundamental constants are not independent, but determined by some still more basic law, as Eddington hoped, but failed, to find. It might turn out that the laws of physics as we know them are the only possible ones, and that our sort of universe is unique. We might then indeed begin to feel that it was for the emergence of conscious life that the whole thing was set up. But until that day, which is very far off, the contribution of science will be essentially critical, disallowing arbitrary cosmologies such as are still the fashion, but with no licence to cast doubt on rational faith.

In weird excitation

D. J. Bohm

HEINZ R. PAGELS

The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature

370pp. Michael Joseph. £10.95.
0 7081 2217 8

This book provides an overview of quantum physics, along with certain related aspects of general relativity. It begins with some historical discussion, including an account of how the Newtonian notion of a mechanical universe was overturned by relativity theory and, in an even more thorough-going way, by the quantum theory. When attempts are made to see what this latter theory means, the result is what Henry R. Pagels calls "quantum weirdness" – a world of paradoxes, apparent lawlessness, and baffling ambiguity. He then goes on to more modern developments, involving new discoveries concerning the nature of the so-called elementary particles that are supposed to constitute the universe. Modern physics now treats these, not as particles at all, but as discrete (quantized) states of excitation of a set of basic space-pervading fields. The book contains an account of how physicists are making progress toward what they call a "grand unified theory", in which it is hoped that, ultimately, all the basic laws of nature will be comprehended in terms of four fundamental forces: strong, electromagnetic, weak and gravitational. Pagels explains how new principles of abstract symmetry, broken by asymmetry, are playing a key part in guiding work toward this goal.

Finally, as indicated in the title, he gives us his own speculative ideas as to how physics may be considered as the language of Nature, in which is contained "a message written in code, a cosmic code". From this the whole of existence takes its cue, in determining what it will be. This sort of idea has already been used in genetics, which treats the DNA molecule as the source of "messages" as to how proteins are to be constructed. However, geneticists generally assume that the laws underlying the movements of the molecules out of which such construction takes place are fixed, like those of physics and chemistry, so that ultimately, the notion of a "code" with its "message" is only a metaphor for what is actually the overall mechanical behaviour of a vast assembly of molecules. What Pagels is proposing is far more radical. Even the molecules, as well as their constituent atoms, electrons, protons, neutrons, quarks, gluons, etc, are the result of a deeper "message" in the "quantum code". So ultimately, there is *nothing* that is not the outcome of the *meaning* of a message. Indeed, so far does the author go in this direction that he proposes that man may be able eventually to "write new messages" which alter the laws of physics (in his own favour, it is to be hoped).

This is perhaps the most interesting feature of the book, because in it Pagels indicates how "hard-nosed physics" can lead some of its practitioners to the conclusion that the entire substance of matter ultimately dissolves into the working out of the meaning of a message, which is in principle alterable through the further working out of the meaning of human thought about the message. Since meaning is one of the basic attributes of mental activity, it becomes difficult to see what is left of the distinction between mind and matter (or observer and observed).

Considering that Pagels also strongly supports the notion that modern physics requires the creation of matter out of nothing (ie, the vacuum) he is implying that something like a universal mind operating upon and within this "nothing" is what determines the nature of reality as a whole. This "mind" works in terms of the meanings of messages, which are unsupported by any ultimate material base that is not the outcome of the total set of messages themselves. To assume a God who would be the source of these messages and their meanings would then be a small step for those who have gone thus far. Or does the author perhaps wish to imply that it is man himself, who can in principle change these messages, who may ultimately awaken to the fact that it is he who has in this way become God?

There are a number of points of detail where I do not agree with Pagels's judgments and evaluations of the significance of recent developments in physics. I feel that his treatment of the proponents of views of "quantum reality" other than his own is less than fair. He treats them as "salesmen" who are in competition in "The Reality Market-place" to have their wares bought by an unsuspecting public. His own views (which he attributes to Niels Bohr) are, by contrast, treated as those of a modest and unassuming sage, who is not out to take advantage of anyone's gullibility. However, one may wonder whether the author himself is not thus more subtly engaged in the activity of selling his ideas in the market-place. His views on Bohr's principle of complementarity are so over-simplified that (as I have already indicated) they belong at least as much to Pagels as to Bohr. Moreover, Pagels does not seem to have noticed that his suggestion that the universe is created out of nothing by means of a "message written in a cosmic code" would seem to be incompatible with his notions concerning the objective reality of the universe as a whole. At the very least, it should have been his responsibility to justify his position on this point.

On the whole, the book is written clearly, and it does not require special technical knowledge to be understood. But, although it contains a number of interesting points (some of which I have mentioned), it does not, in my view, communicate the kind of interest and sense of excitement conveyed, for example, by Zhukov's *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters* or Wolf's *Taking the Quantum Leap*.

On a collision course

W. H. McCrea

MICHAEL ALLABY and JAMES LOVELOCK

The Great Extinction

204pp. Secker and Warburg. £10.95.
0 436 01160 3

There is a schoolboy jest about people waking up on a certain date around 1400 AD and discovering that the Middle Ages had terminated at midnight. Most of us probably grow up with the impression that geological periods are less well-defined even than are the Ages of history. This may be generally true, but there is one transition that was much too precise for anyone to make a joke of it. Some 65 million years ago the Cretaceous period ended and the Tertiary period began, the interface being clearly marked by a thin layer of clay laid down apparently simultaneously at places all over the Earth. And somewhere about the same time thousands of entire species of living things from single-celled micro-organisms to the largest dinosaurs became extinct. Thereafter thousands of new species began to spring up, including the remote ancestors of man.

The "great extinction" has been known about for over a century but this is probably the first book to be devoted to it. Indeed nothing like it could have been written before because it depends crucially upon research carried out after about 1980.

Michael Allaby is a well-known writer on natural history, and on ecology, with particular regard to human survival. James Lovelock is a professional atmospheric chemist of the highest distinction, who is also notable as being probably the only living Fellow of the Royal Society to have worked for much of his career as a freelance scientist. In 1979 he published a remarkable book, *Gaia: A New look at life on Earth*, in which he developed the thesis that conditions on Earth are made congenial for life by the presence of life itself. In the present book these authors present a vast range of scientific ideas of which they have expert knowledge. In the closing chapter, on "Survival", they bring together some of their own special interests which have led them by separate routes to the same conclusion – that what happened 65 million years ago calls for vigilant action by man to safeguard his survival on Earth.

A few years ago Walter Alvarez, a geologist, together with his father, Luis Alvarez, a Nobel Laureate in physics, and with colleagues in Berkeley, began to exploit a new technique for measuring small quantities of particular atomic nuclei and isotopes with a view to improving the dating of geological features. A feature of obvious interest was the afore-mentioned boundary clay. They made the serendipitous discovery that in it the element iridium is from about 20 to 200 times more abundant than in the strata above and below. This result was published in 1980.

Some months earlier the astronomers Victor Clube and William Napier of the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, had published a paper in which they assessed the chance of the Earth being hit by a "planetesimal" of any size and mentioned possible biological consequences, with particular reference to the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction. I do not know who first suggested that such an impact could account for the Alvarez observations, but the authors soon calculated the size of the body that would be needed – a rock-like object 10 to 12 kilometres across, the probability of which on the Clube-Napier calculations was, quite plausible. Because of the known proximity in time to the great extinction, it was natural that these and other scientists began at once to speculate about that encounter as a possible *cause* of the extinction. This is the theme of the present book, which receives its first comprehensive, systematic critical examination.

As the authors indicate, it is a detective exercise on a grand scale. Was the extinction sudden? If so, did it demand a sudden cause? Did this indeed arise at the end of the Cretaceous period? What were all the possible causes? If an impact was most likely, how did it operate? Why did it destroy nearly all reptiles, and not mammals? If it would account for all that did occur, would it necessarily produce other effects that evidently did not occur? These are only a few of the questions tackled in Allaby and Lovelock's closely reasoned discussion, which requires and deserves attentive reading. It is an exhilarating experience.

As presented, the case for ascribing the extinction to the impact of a planetesimal is strong; there seems to be no better explanation. The chief difficulty is in rendering it fully quantitative. We must hope that someone will now produce a numerical simulation that extinguishes/ perpetuates all the right species in all the right numbers. Any such simulation will almost certainly be based upon the analysis provided here.

The book's provisional conclusion is that the great extinction was due to an impact which the authors say (quoting the present reviewer) would have released an amount of energy about equivalent to that of 10 Nagasaki-sized bombs on every square kilometre of the Earth's surface. Life survived; on the whole the human species ultimately benefitted. But if there is a next time, it could be, not the reptiles, but the mammals, including man, that would be extinguished. And the authors seem fairly safe – if that is the word – in inferring that there could be a next time, anytime.

On the Gaia hypothesis they show in their last chapter that life on Earth, and the human species in particular, almost certainly cannot be destroyed by man or by any cause from Earth itself. "The credible threats must come from outside the Earth and the impact of a large planetesimal is the most immediate of them." They propose credible steps to avert this particular threat. This is an important book.

Standards of royalty

John Grigg

KENNETH ROSE

King George V

514pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
0 297 78245 2

There are two official biographies of George V. The first, published in 1941, is by John Gore and deals only with his private life; the second, dealing with the public aspects of his reign, is by Harold Nicolson and was published in 1952. Both appeared during the lifetime of Queen Mary. There has therefore been increasing scope for a new study, to take account of evidence that has come to light during the past thirty years, to assess the king in a truer perspective, and to portray him both as monarch and man within the space of a single volume. This job has now been done – and done superbly – by Kenneth Rose.

Mr Rose is not another official biographer, though he acknowledges much assistance from members of the Royal family, especially the Queen Mother, and the book is dedicated to his friend the Duke of Kent. Without going through the Windsor archive afresh, he has been allowed to use Nicolson's transcripts from it and to quote previously unpublished passages from the king's diary and other documents. In addition, he has consulted many further manuscript sources and drawn on very wide reading about the king's period and his contemporaries. So the book is thoroughly scholarly, though Rose wears his scholarship lightly and brings to his task the qualities of a good gossip-writer as well as those of a good political historian.

Describing the funeral of Edward VII he tells us that the new king, even in the midst of his grief, "was plagued by those trivialities of protocol which at court so often jostle problems of more lasting moment". In this respect courts are a microcosm of the world at large, in which the trivial is forever jostling the important or even the tragic. It is Rose's strength that he gives due attention to matters small and great, revelling in minutiae (which can illuminate as well as entertain) without ever losing sight of the bigger picture.

The same could hardly be said of the king himself, whose obsession with points of detail, notably in the sartorial field, often impaired his sense of proportion. When Lord Birkenhead, as Lord Chancellor, was playing a key part in the negotiations leading to the 1921 Irish Treaty, he was photographed one day arriving at 10 Downing Street wearing an old grey suit and a slouch hat. The King, seeing the photograph in a newspaper, rebuked him for demeaning his office by such informality; and when Birkenhead replied that he had just come up from the country and would have been late for an important meeting if he had gone out of his way to collect a silk hat – adding that "in days far more formal than ours it was never the custom to appraise the adequacy or dignity of Lord Chancellors in terms of head-gear" – the King thought he had been very rude.

Concern about dress, or on occasion the lack of it, also contributed to the uneasy relations between George V and his eldest son; and again pictures seen by the king in newspapers were often the cause of trouble. During one of the Prince of Wales's Empire tours he received a letter from his father reprimanding him for wearing "turned-down collass in white uniform", and another expressing disgust at the sight of him and his cousin, Louis Mountbatten, cooling off at sea ("you might as well be photographed naked, no doubt it would please the public"). Incidentally, Rose has little to say about these tours by the prince, which were surely the outstanding achievement of his life and among the most successful events of George V's reign, of incalculable value to the monarchy. They were undertaken at the suggestion of Lloyd George and it seems, therefore, rather unfair of Rose to remark (admittedly in another context) that Lloyd George "found no merit in the most romantic of all English institutions".

The triumphant survival of that institution through a time of unprecedented turmoil, when most of the world's empires crumbled, is what chiefly distinguishes George V's reign; and Rose shows how much it owed to the king's own character. Despite his limitations he was a fundamentally decent and honest man, whose domestic virtues and gruff good nature earned him, by the end of the reign, an immense popularity. Earlier he had felt less secure, and Rose argues that this was probably why, in 1917, he resisted an offer of asylum to the Russian imperial family which the British government was prepared to make – fear for his dynasty overcoming for once his habitual kindheartedness. But when Labour came to power for the first time in 1924, his qualities began to shine and he quickly established relations of friendship and trust with new ministers whose ostensible political philosophy he deplored. And in his last years his apotheosis was completed by mastery of the new technique of sound broadcasting, apparent in his memorable Christmas broadcasts.

The most controversial act of his career was his intervention in 1931 to dissuade Ramsay MacDonald from resigning, and to prevail upon him, instead, to form a national government. Rose insists that the king's conduct in this matter was perfectly constitutional, and so indeed it was. But was it also wise? Rose does not shirk the question, and answers it in the king's favour. Though it was open to him to ask Baldwin to form a government which, with Liberal support, would have been able to carry out a programme of retrenchment, the king went "one better" by inducing MacDonald to lead a ministry which would "proclaim to the world that Britain spoke with a united and resolute voice".

On the other hand the king's action also had the less fortunate effect of dividing the Labour Party and reducing it to virtual impotence for the rest of the decade, so depriving the country of vigorous, responsible opposition at a time when it was desperately needed. Was this price really worth paying for the semblance of national unity obtained in 1931? One can discuss such questions while remaining, above all, grateful to Rose for his clear and sparkling narrative.

1917 and all that

Frank Johnson

LORD HOME

Letters to a Grandson

151pp. Collins. £6.95.
0 00 217061 2

Someone, perhaps even the author himself, has had the happy idea of publishing some letters which Lord Home, now aged eighty, took it upon himself to write to his grandson at Eton since he thought the boy might like some help in sorting out the twentieth century. The result is a wise little book which seems bound to provide sophisticates with opportunities for much jaded hilarity.

One can see what they mean. "The Kaiser was a spoilt and arrogant bully, who wanted everyone to get out of his way; Hitler (I met him once when he was in a fiendish temper) was a vulgarian who did not care tuppence for his neighbour, and had an insatiable appetite for expansion; while Stalin harnessed the secret police and the armed forces behind communist doctrine, which authorized subversion and, where necessary, force to achieve a political aim."

How trite. But, on the other hand, how true. Certainly, the prose, and the historiographical method, owes something to *1066 And All That*. But such stuff must come as a relief to a lad who is probably being told on all sides by his teachers at Eton that the world is a complex place and that above all we must not be simplistic. On the large and general questions of which Lord Home here treats, the world is not as complex a place as all that. Everything in that paragraph quoted seems perfectly in order.

What of this?

Mussolini to look at was almost totally square, square body, square face and square head which incidentally was quite bald, and to make up for his lack of inches he walked with his chin tilted in the air. But although he was an upstart dictator he made quite a good beginning when he took over power, and he proceeded with a course of general spring cleaning which was long overdue. New and impressive buildings sprang up; litter was collected; the trains ran more nearly to time and so on; but then Mussolini was bitten by the bug of power, and he launched an attack on Abyssinia to protect, as he claimed, long standing Italian interests in that country and that part of Africa.

Well, yes. But there are problems here. Some of us have always been sceptical about Mussolini's famously beneficial effect on the punctuality of Italian rail travel. But Lord Home has no doubt checked the arrival times for the relevant periods (which would be from 1922, the year of Mussolini's coming to office, until around 1935 when he got bitten by that bug of power and invaded Abyssinia). Moreover, claims about the prowess of despots at getting rid of litter are always suspect. Admiring visitors to Mao's China tended to assure us that he had got rid of the flies. Lord Home was presumably never taken in by *them*. But otherwise this Mussolini paragraph seems all right. The physical description of the man is surely as good as any that has ever been written in one sentence. The passage about the earlier good works is designed to differentiate Mussolini from a more completely evil figure such as Hitler. The ability to differentiate between degrees of badness, when considering the men of power with whom more civilized men must deal in this imperfect world, is the beginning of wisdom in foreign policy; so on Mussolini the grandson has been well-served.

Lord Home recognizes the crucial role, in great events, of the absurd. "Sir Samuel at the time was on holiday in Switzerland", he says of Hoare in a passage about Hoare-Laval, "and had fallen on the ice and damaged his arm and broken his nose. Never overburdened with humour, he was reported as saying that he had returned in haste, even though it meant 'leaving behind Lady Maud and the luggage,' so all in all he met a House of Commons which was in a mood to ridicule and condemn."

That is part of a chapter in which he skilfully defends appeasement of Hitler, without robbing his grandson of Churchill as hero. The author's version of our century, and the present, is rather different from that which the boy may have imbibed from any progressives among his tutors. The West is not blamed for the world's sorrow. Brooding over the book is the Soviet Union. The events of 1917 are those from which all the tragedies flow.

As for who Lord Home was, in twentieth-century history, the young may care to know that he was a thin, charming man who incidentally seemed to have very little flesh on his head when contesting an election on television against Mr Wilson, who then seemed a very clever man, but who after beating Lord Home, was found out. He kept on changing his name. First he was Lord Dunglass, then Lord Home, then Sir Alec Douglas-Home before becoming Lord Home again. He liked being Foreign Secretary, which he was good at. He only became Prime Minister because Mr Butler had appeased Hitler years before. On the other hand, Lord Home had been PPS to Chamberlain, which only goes to show that there is no logic in politics.

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Brian Pippard

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Modern physics, it need hardly be said, is no more able than any other branch of learning to affirm or deny God's existence, and a wide range of beliefs is found among physicists. In line with what he wishes to do, Paul Davies rightly takes some pains to conceal his own belief. One may infer, however, that he is not as well read in conventional Christian doctrine or in modern theology as he is in theoretical physics: and he might have done better to stick more closely to physics since neither theology nor popular religion has much in common with the sort of arguments he deploys. He would also have done better to discipline himself to give less weight to some of the heterodoxies which float around enlivening the lives of professional cosmologists before falling into limbo. The book would have been more valuable if the space thus wasted were given to a more leisurely exposition of the rather less spectacular fundamentals. In principle the subject is of such deep importance that it should not need fireworks to attract readers. Having said this, I gladly allow that there is a wealth of interesting ideas here, hardly available elsewhere, such as will appeal to the contemplative mind.

If a religious system seeks to describe man's place in nature and his relation to the divine, it is proper for science to make its contribution towards the description of nature. In *God and the New Physics* Professor Davies sets out to explain, with as little technical complexity as possible, what modern physics can contribute towards understanding the nature of God: For a fruitful dialogue between science and religion there must be some agreement on premises – it is useless to argue nice points of physics with an eastern sage for whom all being is illusion. Christian doctrine, however, accepts that the world was created and that in it all things living and dead exist as separate entities. That is to say, the primitive outlook of the scientist is compatible with that of the Christian. When a scientist feels certain of a fact of observation and analysis, he may expect that fact to be incorporated into the world view of all serious thinkers: in deriving a description of the physical world faith and revelation are by comparison feeble tools. In a world so riddled with pseudo-sciences it is important to recognize that physical theory has reached a point of internal consistency that justifies its being treated as a dogma. It is not a vague botch-potch of ideas but a precise specification of the mathematical programme to be followed in order to predict exactly what behaviour will follow the observation of a given state of affairs. This is not to say the programme is always practicable – far from it, since the mathematics may be entirely beyond the power of the largest conceivable computer. But when the problem is soluble, the prescribed procedure is utterly reliable: if experiment and theory should disagree, as they frequently do, experimenter and theorist carefully check every step of their procedures – only a crank would conclude that the basic laws were at fault. I am writing, it must be stressed, about the central doctrines of physics, not about the extreme situations where surprises may be expected. But nothing that the still undiscovered quarks or black holes may reveal will affect the laws of quantum mechanics, which suffice to solve almost every problem from the atomic nucleus to the limits of our galaxy, and indeed well beyond.

The philosophically interesting point about this marvellous fabric of theory is that it demands acceptance of ideas which are inconceivable to the human mind. Thinking creatures must be highly organized and constructed of a huge number of atoms, and it happens that the physical laws which govern large aggregates, although logically derived from the laws that apply to atoms, do not confer on man-sized bodies the same properties as atoms. We therefore have no analogies to help us understand why for example we must never seek to know by what path an electron travelled from A to B: for if we had any information, however obtained, about its position at an intermediate point, it would affect the chance of its reaching B. This is not what happens to billiard-balls. The paradoxes of quantum mechanics have been with us since its discovery in 1926, resisting all attempts to resolve them: and it is generally accepted that no resolution will be found in terms of everyday understanding. In the days before quantum physics, when atoms were billiard-balls obeying the eminently reasonable laws of classical physics, it was possible to believe that this picture represented the real truth – that if God were to look down on us he would see things in the same way. We now know that whatever the truth may be, what we see is so distorted by our senses that the best we can hope to do is to describe precisely, without knowing what we describe, like a colour-blind man before a painting, only very much more so.

It is one peculiarity of quantum mechanics that the universe of electrically charged particles, protons and electrons, cannot admit anywhere even one magnetic pole unless its pole strength is exactly right. The unequivocal discovery, in the most distant galaxy, of a wrong pole would make it impossible to formulate the basic equations of quantum mechanics, and destroy the whole theoretical structure. In fact magnetic poles are great rarities and it is too early to say whether the single reported finding is valid; at all events, if it were claimed to have the wrong strength no one would believe it.

It may be the case that a single particle can affect everything in the universe, yet as far as local processes are concerned we remain indifferent to its possible existence. Perhaps this paradox is clarified if we consider an enormous tangled ball containing many pieces of string. Nobody looking at a small region of it would be upset to find an odd number of ends there, but it is another matter if the whole mass has an odd number. This simple example may serve loosely as a symbol for much in the physical description of the universe, where all parts interlock closely, yet in a way that is discernible only on the large scale. If you swing a weight round in a circle at the end of a cord, you feel the force of the weight trying to escape; but if you were to do the same in an empty universe you would feel no force. In truth the empty universe postulated by Newton is no universe at all – as Berkeley suspected. According to the General Theory of Relativity the sensation we have in our daily lives of living in a framework of space results from the presence of what we perceive as heavy masses: the stars and other celestial objects. So far as the laws of physics are concerned, the universe is a self-contained entity with everything coupled to everything else, but in such a way that on a human scale it seems as if we were living independent lives, under a dispassionate heaven. Moreover, we experience space and time as entirely different things, although on the cosmic scale they are tightly linked, as was first made clear by Einstein in his Special Theory of Relativity.

All of this is very relevant to the creation of the universe. It is only very recently that astronomical observations of many types, and complex theoretical studies of how the reactions of fundamental particles came to produce the chemical elements in the proportions we know, have provided virtually unassailable evidence that the universe started with a Big Bang. A minute and inconceivably hot primitive fireball exploded with something like the velocity of light, and now, some twenty billion years later, has reached the form of the universe we know. It did not explode into the Void – itself was the only space there was. Moreover the explosion did not begin at a certain instant in time – space and time came into being at the moment the starting pistol was fired. But why was the pistol fired, and what is it that is not the universe but that from which the universe sprang? As soon as we try to speculate on such questions we are completely tongue-tied; only verbs without tenses and nouns without extension are permitted, and discourse is limited to mere ejaculation: Mind! Love! This may not be a satisfying theology, but at all events physics has done what it is rather good at doing; it has cleared the ground. We know that when we describe what goes on in the universe in terms of daily experience, we are at best using a dubious metaphor in the absence of a relevant language. And we know also, as wiser men than physicists have always known, that if we attempt to describe God as if he were confined within the universe, we are diminishing his glory.

This, however, is the contribution that physics has to make only to the idea of God the creator. It is quite separate from the idea of a personal God, something on which Davies is silent, doubtless because he feels this to lie beyond the competence of physics. Nevertheless a physicist should always remind himself that although there is precious little modern evidence that God ever suspends the laws of nature in order to intervene in material affairs, this is no argument against the existence of unknown influences, subject to unknown laws, which transcend space and time as our mundane senses perceive them. But it seems these are not to be revealed by the objective procedures of science. For example, molecular biology has left little room for belief in any extra-physical vital force conferring life on otherwise dead matter. The more deeply one investigates living



"Il vero ritratto d'uno stupendo mostro da contadini" (left) and "Humani victus instrumenta" (right), two etchings dating from the 1560s from the circle of Giuseppe Archimboldo, offered for sale by Sotheby's recently. The one on the left is apparently an earlier version of an etching used as a pair to that on the right.

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